

Halo: Flood of Regret

by NH3

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Summary: Set right after Halo 3, the Arbiter is finally heading home. But what seems like a peaceful journey soon becomes the discovery of Spartan 117, the final installations, an entirely different breed of Flood, and the last relics of the Forerunners. R&R pleas

1. Chapter 1

NH3: God, I keep multitasking myself with stories, swim practice, Halo 3, etc. I've seen the legendary mode ending, so I came up with something. Here it is. SAQ will accompany me later.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1012 hours**** March 21, 2553(Adopted Sangheili Calendar) / _The Shadow of Intent,_ ** **leaving Earth.****

"Take us home," the Arbiter said.

"Yes, Excellency," a navigation officer responded. "Preparing escape burn. Initiating now."

The ships plasma engines came online. The Shadow of Intent sped through the atmosphere, moving faster and faster until they finally escaped orbit. The Arbiter hadn't even felt it.

"Put some distance and jump to Slipspace," the Arbiter said. He was getting eager to see Sanghelios again. The last time he saw it, he was an ensign, watching it disappear from his view as the ship jumped to the dimension of Slipspace. Now that the war was over and the Covenant was nothing but individual species struggling to revert back to their former technology tiers, the Arbiter knew that he could do anything. And seeing the planet again was his first order.

"Transferring to Slipspace," the NAV officer said after picking the

route and altering the Slipspace tangles on the hologram. The Arbiter felt a very small shaking as they transferred.

"I will retire now," The Arbiter said. "Scan the ship for trackers, holes, anything, and report it to me if there is anything wrong." He went into the quarters the former captain had arranged for him. The former would be sleeping in the room he had given the Arbiter.

The Arbiter looked around his new quarters. He still didn't believe the war was over, since it had seemed very unlikely. So the Arbiter quickly investigated the room for any camouflage Brutes or other enemies. When the Arbiter was satisfied, he took his helmet off. He looked into the mirror and examined the burns on his face from the day he was almost considered a heretic. He now was and wasn't one. Who else would call him that now? But those burns would stay there forever, just like the Mark of Shame.

At this thought, he took off his chest plate and examined the branding also. It was a symbol from the Prophets' language. He no longer thought of the prophets as the San 'Shyuum, the Covenant name for them. He used the crude language of humans for their names, since they were a plague upon the Arbiter.

Well, not anymore, the Arbiter thought. He was proud to have this mark, and no longer considered it shameful. In fact, he thought it was one of the things that had kept him a part of the Sangheili race. The Arbiter thought about making it the new Sangheili symbol. None of the others had minded when he told them his idea. But it wasn't his decision. It was the decision of the new leaders of the newly formed government. They no longer had a bureaucracy, like the Prophets did. They had adopted humanity's democratic system. But now, the Arbiter kept his flowing mind quiet. He took off the rest of the armor and put on bedclothes. Now, the Arbiter had to get some sleep.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1929 hours, March 2, 2553(Adopted Sangheili Calendar) / The Shadow of Intent, ***in Slipspace, approaching Sanghelios.****

"Excellency? Are you there?" the com said. The Arbiter woke his eyes up and picked up the com.

"Yes?"

"Excellency, we are almost at Sanghelios," the NAV officer said.

"I'll be right there," the Arbiter said. He got out of his bed and donned his armor. He then left and entered the bridge.

"Time to destination?" he asked.

"Four minutes, Excellency," the Sangheili said. Three minutes ticked by. Suddenly, the screens flickered and then shorted out, useless.

"Excellency, power failure from unknown source!" the engineer yelled.

"Communications are proving that the entire ship is feeling the effects, Excellency!" the COM officer said.

"Slipspace failure! Brace yourselves!" the NAV officer yelled. The entire ship shook as it unexpectedly fell out of Slipspace.

"Put the power back on!" the Arbiter yelled.

"Yes, Excellency," the engineer said. Lights began to come back on. Screens flickered to life as well.

"What the hell was that?" the Arbiter asked.

"We are now receiving reports of stowaway Brutes in the engine room. Our forces are converging on them as we speak, Excellency," the COM officer said.

"But such a small group couldn't disable the entire ship in that time, am I right?" the Arbiter said.

"Yes, Excellency," the Arbiter's new commander said. The former captain couldn't take that position; he was far too old. So that position had been given to a Sangheili named Nico Hornyak. The Arbiter has always wondered where the name came from, since it sounded a lot like a female human name. But he knew Nico couldn't be doubted in anything; he was the leading Spec Ops officer before he was given this position. He was one of the best swordfighters the ship had, he was a heretic before the entire race had left the Covenant, and he knew far more than the Arbiter ever would. On top of that, he was fast, agile, and acrobatic. What he lacked in strength, he made up for speed.

"Excellency, I'm picking up something—it might be a signal," the NAV officer said.

"Let me analyze it," the COM officer said. After a few moments, he started to speak.

"Excellency, the signal is a beacon. It's a human class type coming from the nearby planet."

"Nearby planet?" Nico questioned. "According to the maps, there isn't a single planet here, Excellency."

"All the more reason to be suspicious," the Arbiter said. "Give me a visual."

"Yes, Excellency," the NAV officer said. "Rotating object into view—got it, Excellency!" The hologram activated and everyone who saw it knew what they were looking at. The size of the object could match a small moon. It was a portal. It looked exactly like the one that the Covenant had activated at the remains of New Mombasa. Around it floated humongous chunks made of an unknown metal. The Arbiter knew these remains were part of the Ark. The screen zoomed in to see a UNSC ship floating out of the reach of the portal.

"Excellency, that is where the signal is coming from," the NAV officer said. The Arbiter recognized it instantly. It was the back half of the ship he escaped the Ark in, the same half that never followed through the portal, and finally, the half that brought upon

Spartan-117's death. The Arbiter no longer called him a demon, but just called him the 'Chief', the 'Master Chief' and 'John.'

Wait a second! The back half was here! The Chief could be on it.

"I'm going to take a search team down there," the Arbiter announced. "Nico, come with me,"

"Yes, Excellency," he said as he followed the Arbiter out.

"And please stop calling me 'Excellency'. 'Arbiter' will do fine, and I'll call you Nico," Arbiter said.

"Yes, Excellency," Nico corrected himself. They entered the hanger and the Arbiter pulled on a life-support suit. Nico did the same. They then rounded up the other Sangheili into the Phantom and they rocketed toward the wreckage. A few minutes passed by before a 'bump' was heard. The doors opened and the team fanned out.

The Arbiter looked around. He remembered that this was where he escaped to the bridge and the Master Chief had stayed and put Cortana in the nearby port. The Arbiter walked up to it and Cortana shifted into his view.

"Arbiter?" she said.

"Yes?" he said.

"Oh, good! It is you after all!" she said. "The Master Chief is in Cryo 1."

"Thanks," he said.

"I'll get him out," Cortana said. The Sangheili team floated through the wreckage and entered the Cryo room. They crowded near the tube. Only the Arbiter and Nico stood near it. The tube hissed, the cover slammed to the floor, and the Master Chief shook his head.

"Welcome back, John," Cortana said soothingly from the nearby holoport.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: No, this isn't a story about the Chief's transfer to civilization. This is about another fight against one more threat that no one really considered.

2. Chapter 2

NH3: Wow, I am so shocked. Five minutes after posting this, I get two reviews, one Story Alert and one Favorite Story. I'm also already getting many hits. So, ten minutes after posting the first chapter, I'll now start the second! And even though I had other things to take care of, I got more Alerts and Favorites, all in the morning!

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

2001 hours, March 2**2****, 2553 (UNSC Official Time) ****Cryo Storage 1,** _**near ****unknown ****portal.**_

The Master Chief stood up in the cryo-tube and looked at the Elites around him. He jumped down and was vaguely reminded that he did the very same movements on the Pillar of Autumn, when the first Halo was discovered. The Master Chief nodded to Cortana's greeting.

"Master Chief," the Arbiter said. Nico nodded nearby and, in a pure act of respect, saluted instead of bowing his head. Inside his armor, John smiled. But he quickly stopped as he remembered the adventure he had just been through and all the lives sacrificed in the process. It was a feeling that made himâ€|wrong.

"How did you find us?" he asked.

"By a stroke of luck," the Arbiter responded. "I can tell you what happened."

"Later," the Chief said. "Cortana, how long has it been?"

"I'm not quite sure. Being on High Charity, and having barely anything to do, has messed with my mission clock, although I estimate roughly around two to four months," Cortana said.

"That's about right," Nico said. "We were at Earth, waiting for the peace agreements and memorial ceremony to take place. We left right after."

"He is correct. Now, we should head back to the Shadow of Intent," the Arbiter said.

"No, not yet!" Cortana cried out.

"Why is that?" Nico asked.

"Just the fact that this ship was on the Halo and the Ark means we need to make sure that Flood spores don't continue to spread. We have to destroy the wreckage!"

"Doesn't it seem unlikely that a Flood spore would survive in vacuum?" the Arbiter asked. John nodded in agreement.

"Yes, but there are still air holes in the ship. We can't eliminate them all by opening every door. We have to eradicate everything," Cortana maintained.

"So how do we go about this?" The Master Chief said.

"We detonate the fusion reactor on the Forward Unto Dawn," she said.

"Excellency, let me handle this. I think you've risked your life too many timesâ€|both of you," Nico said, noting both the Arbiter and the Master Chief.

"Alright, but if you don't return inâ€|"Cortana, how long?" the Arbiter said.

"Five minutes after detonation, allowing time to move away from the

ship in the Phantom" she answered.

"Right, well if you don't return in that time, then we will have to leave without you," he finished.

"Yes, Excellency," Nico said.

"Attention!" the Arbiter called out. The Elites bowed to him and the Master Chief saluted. Nico maintained a serious face and half bowed, half saluted in a very awkward manner. He then turned and ran off.

"Chief, slot me in," Cortana reminded him. He downloaded her to a brand-new data chip and slotted her in the back of his helmet. He felt the comforting coldness fill his mind.

"It's still cozy I see," Cortana quirked. The Chief ignored her.

"Sangheili, make your way back to the Phantom," the Arbiter called out. "Let's go, Chief!"

The Master Chief followed them back to the Phantom.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****2007*** hours, March 22, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili
***CalendarForward Unto Dawn, ***Flood nest,** **near unknown
portal.****

Cortana was right. A single spore on this ship could have probably ended the galaxy. But, Nico realized that the inner sensors were burned out when he came across not a few spores, but an entire Flood nest, much like the one the Master Chief had seen on Earth and on the Ark. Nico noticed that there was no Gravemind presence. But, as he fought the many Flood beings that ended up infesting the ship, Nico heard a small, strained cackling. It would haunt him for days after that.

Nico was halfway there so far. It was slow work; he carried a sword, but there were too many Flood beings to use it effectively. Nico had resorted to using a shotgun from one of the former Combat Form. Its remains were just a few limbs and a puddle of gore. Nico shot his way through hoards of Flood, finding out that a strike with the shotgun would easily dispatch some of the largest foes. Finally, after what seemed like forever, he reached the engine room.

Miraculously, the nest hadn't spread this far. A few stray Combat Forms ran around and Nico blew them apart. Nico opened the engines in the same way the Chief did on the Autumn. Nico reached for his belt to find that the only weapon he had left was the energy sword. That wouldn't help him out, so he had to improvise.

Nico's ability to improvise was well-known. He always viewed these problems as a challenge. And in these challenges, he always won. His most well-known story was how he saved a former ship he forgot about. The humans were still the common enemy then, so when Nico found himself on the wrong end of firepower, Nico got the ship out of it. The ship was in atmosphere, the three ships were firing hell upon

them, and Nico launched and detonated several human bombsâ€”underneath them! The heat made them drop down enough for the humans to miss. And it was those precious seconds that gave a Covenant patrol fleet in Slipspace to drop out and ambush the enemy fleet. Nico no longer felt proud of it, though.

Nico walked back to where the nest ended. He scanned the walls and grabbed four, basketball sized bubbles. When they exploded, they did so with the same effects a regular grenade would on his shields: they were depleted entirely. They would surely do for his purposes.

Nico carried them over to the control panel. He set them down gently, since if they popped, it would mean the death of him. Opening each engine core, Nico lobbed the bubbles into them, hard enough to pop them on impact. On the fourth one, the ship started to detonate.

The lone Sangheili ran for his life. Behind him, the engine room was getting hotter, and it was already burning through the Flood nest. The floors and walls were so dry, they burned like paper. Nico ran to the elevator shaft he climbed up. Right before he jumped down, the elevator came crashing down and stopped at the level. It was disabled too much. Nico's mission clock showed he had two minutes left.

Nico ran further, out of the nest on the other side. He batted away any Flood forms and ran, looking for another elevator. But he knew it was hopeless: the other elevator was probably with the other half, which was underwater back on Earth. Nico looked and saw his time was up. The Phantom had left already. The Sangheili felt a moment of despair. But it soon evaporated as he thought of another way off. He ran back to find what he needed.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****2015 hours, March 22, 2553 (UNSC Official Time)** **Sangheili
Phantom AA-01,** **near unknown portal.****

"That's it. He is far too late," the Arbiter said. They were waiting out of range of the blast. They saw the entire wreckage blowing up in several places. The heat began to intensify. Ten seconds to detonation, the Master Chief saw a flaming missile coming out of the wreckage. He instantly recognized it as a lifeboat.

"John!" Cortana cried out, still using his real name. But she didn't need to say more. The Master Chief could already tell that the flight path was far too organized to be ejected from the ship by any other cause. There was someone on that boat, and the Chief was sure it was that brave Elite. The boat rocketed to the portal, entered it making a ripple effect, and disappearing as the wreckage exploded into nothing.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: By the time I finished this chapter, I had received my 17th email regarding that this story was on another Favorites List. The most annoying part, though, is that only two people have reviewed! Now I know that getting this on so many other things is good, but I think more satisfaction come from what someone's opinion. So R&R. Oh, I forgot the disclaimer.

DISCLAIMER: I do not own Halo, Halo 2, or Halo 3. The majority of elements in this story is from the mind of Bungee, and Bungee only (They have cornered the FPS game industry and will probably do the same for the strategy game industry with their release of Halo Wars, also property of Bungee)

OWNERSHIP CLAIM: The only thing I own is the Elite/Sangheili Nico Hornyak, pronounced "Horn" and "Yak" for those who have really sick minds. (Mentally disturbed people raise flamethrowers) No offense! The name, as a useless fact, is actually Hungarian. Well, it's alien enough for me!

3. Chapter 3

NH3: I somehow managed to do all I needed to do to have some time on the computer. So, since you've been begging for more, I'll give you just that. So I decided to put my Star Fox fan fiction on hold and continue with this one, how lucky you all must be.

DISCLAIMER: I do not own this website either. I only have an account that has been doing well recently.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****2020 hours, March 22, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Calendar) _Shadow of Intent,_ ****hanger bay BA-02,** **near unknown portal.****

The Arbiter heard the faint pings in the metal as they entered the hanger. It was a few moments before they felt a small bump upon landing. The Arbiter didn't have the patience to wait for the Phantoms doors to open slowly. He pushed the one on his side so they both continued up at awkward angles. He broke free of the small ship and scurried off to the next pair of doors. Sangheili parted before him as he went through more doors and emerged on the bridge with the Master Chief behind him.

"Officer, make ready to enter the portal!" the Arbiter yelled.

"Yeâ€"Yes, Excellency!" the Sangheili said haltingly, noticing his superior's fierce look.

"Aren't we taking this a little too fast?" Cortana asked in her semi-sarcastic manner.

"We don't have time to wait. Nico is one of the few remaining officers of high ranking status. The civil war took out most of the rest and our government said to preserve the lives of high ranking officers," the Arbiter retorted.

"But can't we get help? Your home world isn't too far away, right?" Cortana said, persistent in her persuasion.

"It would take a full day to organize a rescue force. One full day in which Nico could get wounded, killed, or worse," the Arbiter said. Each of those words somehow felt like a knife, no matter how unlikely it could be.

"Then we should send a message," the Master Chief cut in.

"Not possible. The sudden sabotage disabled the communications," And he was right, since the COM officer was typing command after command on his screen, sometimes coming with an error message.

"Then maybe I can fix it," Cortana said. "Just slot me in."

The Master Chief yanked the data chip out of the base of his skull. He handled it carefully, treating it like a lifeline. The Arbiter took it and slotted it into a human data port, which was hastily erected on Earth. Almost instantly, thousands of lines started to appear on the COM officer's screen. He leaned back, amazed at the site. Almost as suddenly, they stopped.

"Problem?" the Chief said.

"Two, actually. You want the bad news or the worse news first?" Cortana asked.

"Bad, then worse. If it involves my ship, I would have to know it," the Arbiter said.

"The damage to your communications is physical also. I can't fix the entire thing," she said.

"And the worst news?" John said. Anxiety was filling him, and he already knew the situation would be a lot worse.

"I'm detecting Infection Forms and Combat Form aboard the ship," Cortana said very fast. "I don't now how they did it, but we have to get this ship away from here!"

"All the more reason for us to go," the Arbiter said.

"No. We still need to get a signal out," the Chief cut in once again. John noticed that tension was creeping up between the Arbiter and Cortana and he was about to make himself a part of that.

"He is right. If you just disappear, along with your ship, then another war could start from nothing," Cortana said, supporting the Chief.

"Yes, but we have no way of getting a signal out in time," the Arbiter said. At this, the COM officer turned in his seat.

"Um, Excellency, we do have a way of getting a signal out," he said. The Chief saw the red armor and assumed this was the lieutenant color. But it could have been the armor for an ensign as well.

"What is it, Officer?"

"Jyndenr. Officer Jyndenr," he introduced himself.

"Well, what is your idea, Officer Jyndenr?" the Arbiter finished.

"We can use one of the spare lifeboats and leave it in high orbit around the portal. We can use the attached beacon to broadcast our message. It will only last a few days, since after it will plunge

down into the portal because of gravity, but it's enough for someone to send a message out," Jyndenr said. The entire room was silent. Then, the Arbiter chuckled in satisfaction.

"That is a clever idea. Alright, let's do it. There is an extra right off the bridge," he said. John found it weird how the Arbiter was so worried about his fellow kin a few moments ago, but now was chuckling with happiness. Was he happy that he would get his chance to rescue Nico?

The Master Chief followed the Arbiter and Jyndenr.

"I'll draft and write the messageâ€¦done," Cortana said. The Master Chief climbed in and read the message on the screen, which was now being broadcast:

"Sudden failure in _Shadow of Intent's_ engines dropped us out of Slipspace and stranded us here. Sangheili search team explored the wreckage of _Forward Unto Dawn_ orbiting uncharted Forerunner portal. Located and rescued Spartan-117 John and AI Construct Cortana. Detonated the remains of the fusion reactor to stop imminent Flood danger. Commander Nico Hornyak in charge of the operation went alone and escaped in a lifeboat through the portal. As per Sangheili protocol, we are responsible for bringing him back, so we've entered the portal on a rescue mission. Be advised: Flood threat may be existent. Flood forms are aboard _Shadow of Intent_. Organize a fleet and follow after us."

The Master Chief nodded in satisfaction. He climbed out and watched through a window as the lifeboat traveled down a tube and into the vacuum of space.

"It's done. Now, let us enter the portal," the Arbiter said. As his sentence ending, there were several bangs on the door. The Master Chief went and opened the door, a carbine at the ready. Several Sangheili ran in, followed by a flood of Infection Forms and two combat forms. The Chief shot and exploded several of the bulbous creatures. The officers pulled out plasma rifles, shooting the Infection Forms until they were just gore. The Arbiter lunged forward and sliced at a Combat Form with his personal energy sword. The Master Chief charged the other, putting plasma-coated projectiles into its mass before beating the Flood form down.

"Lock the doors and head for the portal! Do it now!" the Arbiter yelled. Cortana activated the plasma engines and they all fell backwards from the change in speed. Cortana rocketed toward the portal when two shadows appeared on the portal's 'surface'.

"Uh-oh," Cortana said. And 'uh-oh' was right: the Flood hadn't hitched a ride, they used infiltration craft from the two Flood-controlled ships that were moving to intercept the _Shadow of Intent_.

"That portal must have some reason for these Flood ships!" Cortana said. "I'll try to lure them back into it."

Two plasma beams fired from the _Shadow of Intent_. They impacted on the shields, hardly doing damage, but it was enough to have the Flood go on a pursuit course.

As the ship shuddered from the acceleration, the Master Chief reminded himself how much he loathed space-combat. It was an emotion that left him feeling useless. He then felt an overwhelming sadness crush him out of nowhere. He had just remembered that almost every Spartan had loathed the same thing. But almost all of them were dead. As Cortana maneuvered the ship into the portal, the Chief wondered if he would ever see them again.

It was that thought that somehow separated itself from the others in his head.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: Sorry everyone, but you have to wait until next chapter before you come to what happened to Nico. So sorry. Anyway, this chapter was detailing the time on the ship because I really felt that more should come than just entering the portal. Plus I didn't want to rush it or lack in emotion. So R&R, if the chapter wasn't well-written, send me ideas and I'll try incorporating them into the next chapter. What can I say about that? Well, I'm just a nice guy...or maybe not.

4. Chapter 4

NH3: The funny part is that whenever I start a chapter, someone puts this story on Alerts, Favorites and Reviews. But even then, school, swimming and everything else is KILLING ME! Anyway, R&R please. See the random disclaimer.

DISCLAIMER: I don't own the Internet or Bill Gates.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****2100 hours, March 22, 2553 (UNSC Official Time) ***unknown location, near unknown construct.****

The Master Chief felt the pain in his arm go away as he got up. The flight to the portal had knocked his arm against several walls, hard enough to cause denting in the walls. The Master Chief saw Elites picking themselves up from the floor and looking behind him. The Master Chief turned around and looked toward the view screen. The Arbiter walked up beside him.

"By the godsâ€¦" he whispered. Even false truths had sayings that were said out of habit.

They were looking at another Halo. The Master Chief thought they had been destroyed with the destruction of the Ark. But he realized that the thought was only an assumption. The Halos were still out there, still ready to fire its catastrophic weapons. The Master Chief knew that the discovery of this one needed action retaining to its destruction. But that wasn't the only thing that awed him.

The planet the ring orbited was inhabited. From his point-of-view, John could see greenish lights all over the continents. There were oceans, clouds, anything needed to support life. But along with this sighting came a feeling of worry. The planet seemed a little ominous and creepy to him.

"Cortana, scan the planet," he said. A moment passed.

"Done. Scan results show this culture was just started to use space travel," she said.

"Was?" the Arbiter asked.

"What the true nature of this culture was is entirely unknown to me. The inhabitants are all Flood now," she continued.

"Really?" the Arbiter asked, hoping it wasn't true.

"Really."

"Is there any sign of Nico Hornyak?" the Master Chief asked.

"No sign on the planet. I'm scanning the ringâ€¦got it. I'm detecting a lifeboat beacon. There is a message along with it," she continued.

"What does it say?" the Master Chief asked.

"It says that Nico crash-landed on Halo. It already had a breach in containment protocol, so Nico is finding shelter. He advises that we be on the lookout for a new Flood species, as they are remotely difficult to terminate," she said. "There is no clue as to where Nico could have gone."

"Well, we have no choice but to head to the ring. The ship is being infested and two infested ships are following us. I think this ship will have to crash-land," the Arbiter said. Everyone nodded in solemn agree. The Arbiter pressed a button, which activated alarms all over the ship, detailing escape routes and warnings.

"Everyone to the lifeboat," the Arbiter whispered. A pause, and than everyone filed out into the hallway, where a lifeboat lay. The Master Chief took Cortana out of the slot and saw the Arbiter looking around at his ship. He then ran over and climbed into the lifeboat.

"Prepare yourselves, everyone," Cortana said. The Master Chief inserted her in the nearby slot. The lifeboat launched into space and the ring appeared before them. The Master Chief braced himself for a shaky entry. He saw the _Shadow of Intent _rocket over them and enter the atmosphere of the planet. The Master Chief braced himself as the shockwave hit them. The lifeboat then entered the atmosphere of Halo.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****2110*** hours, March 22, 2550 (Adopted Sangheili Time), ** **Halo desert,**** ****unknown location, Installation 03.****

Nico had been walking for hours in the scorching sun. The heat was unbearable already, and Nico was dying from thirst. He thought he would get a drink after he detonated the fusion reactor. He was sorely mistaken.

Nico had made the discovery of the ring and the nearby inhabited

planet. Unfortunately, he had to find out about the new Flood types the hard way. They seemed to be intelligent, but they still acted like Flood. It was just that these were electronic types, having electrical components welded onto the skin. It made them a lot harder to beat. So when he had to face three, he was in for some trouble.

The Sangheili had earlier crashed on the ring, which was hard enough to sprain his ankle. His arm was broken by one of the Flood beings and his forehead was cut by another. He managed to destroy them, but walking through the desert for shelter with a makeshift bandage and sling and trudging through the sand on a bad ankle was tough on him. The wounds had wasted more nutrients than he wanted. So now he was wounded, malnourished, dehydrated, and ready to collapse.

Nico trudged on, stopping to rest a few times. Nico could feel the effects of his personal calamities try to persuade him to dig for water. But he knew he shouldn't, for it would kill him if he was sucked under the sands. Nico collapsed to his knees a few times, every other time, digging through the sand until he stopped himself. Finally, he couldn't stand it no more. He needed water! Nico fell to his knees and started digging. But only his knees were swallowed up before he became disoriented and fell unconscious after a few dazing moments.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****2115 hours, March 22, 2550 (Adopted Sangheili Time),** **Halo desert*** (Lifeboat crash site)** **unknown location, Installation 03.****

The Master Chief kicked down the broken hatch and looked around. They were in the middle of the desert. The Arbiter had already called for air travel, so they looked around for traces of Nico. There weren't many, however. The few they could find were the new Flood bodies, a discarded energy sword which was empty, and a coil from a plasma rifle. All pointed to the 'west' direction. Now, the Master Chief was getting jittery, hoping the Phantom would arrive soon.

In the mean time, the Chief removed Cortana from the lifeboat, grabbed a carbine and plasma rifle, and watched for enemies. The Phantom finally arrived and the party piled aboard.

"Where to, Excellency?" the pilot asked.

"To the west. We're looking for Commander Nico Hornyak," the Arbiter replied. The Phantom lifted off, kicking up wide swaths of sand around it. The pilot continued to run scans over the next three miles until he got a match.

"Excellency, I found him!" he yelled excitedly. The pilot turned and landed them next to Nico's, form. The Arbiter pushed his way out again, holding two canteens of water.

"Commander!" he yelled. Nico didn't response. The Arbiter poured water from one canteen over the Sangheili's dry skin. Nico stirred ever so slightly and the Arbiter put water in his mouth. Nico's eyes fluttered open, but they immediately closed again. The Master Chief helped carry him over to the ship. The ship took off to the base other Sangheili had set up. The Arbiter sat down and sighed. That was

only the beginning.

Now they had a hard choice to make.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: I can already tell this chapter may not live up to expectations, but I'm operating on time I usually don't have, so it's hurting me a lot. Hopefully, the next chapter is better. But somehow, I still think this chapter wasn't bad, just a little quick. R&R for getting this out. Funny-er, I just recieved an Alert at the end.

5. Chapter 5

NH3: I stalled on this chapter for a while because of one reason: my last chapter pretty much sucked in my opinion. I even noticed that the years were off by three! If you think this was bad also, then flame that chapter. Not this one! R&R pls. See the RANDOM DISCLAIMER!

DISCLAIMER: I do not own someone's stupidity.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1345 hours, March 24, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time),** **Mountains (Forerunner containment facility),** **unknown location, Installation 03.****

Nico woke very suddenly. What he thought immediately was bare sand was instead a gray and brown ceiling. Nico turned his head, shaking off disorientation. He made a feeble attempt to sit up on the makeshift bed, but quickly failed. Nico felt tingling all over his body.

So he was still sedated. That was why he couldn't move. Nico quickly assumed the reason was because he still had broken bones. But even then, that couldn't possibly be exactly right.

Nico heard a door swish open. He turned his head toward a door that vaguely reminded him of doors on the ship. These were more angular, though. Where was he?

As the Sangheili lay there in his thoughts, the Arbiter entered through the doorway. When Nico didn't immediately register to his presence, the Arbiter became curious. He moved to the commander's right side and Nico finally noticed him.

"Arbiter!" Nico said, struggling to sit up and at least salute him. It didn't matter: he was still sedated.

"At ease, young one," the Arbiter said. The commander was far younger than himself, and the term suited him. Nico stopped struggling against the medicine.

"Nico, how did you get in this state so rapidly?" the Arbiter asked.

"What do you mean? With the medicine, I fell fine," Nico said. The Arbiter pressed a button and the back half of what must be a hover bed rose. Nico got a good look at his surroundings and saw that he was in one of the many strange Forerunner facilities. He looked forward at the mirror on the wall and received such a shock.

His entire body was almost wasted. He hadn't seen himself in a mirror for a long time, but looking at it quickly brought forward all the risks he always took. He saw the crude wrappings he himself had put on his head. Nico knew that the scab had molded to the cloth; blood soaked through it heavily. And he saw his arm, by the gods! It must have been broken in three places! His ankle didn't look good at all. He saw a sliver of bone sticking out of it! The fact that he wouldn't stop moving until he found shelter was only backed by his strong determination.

"We haven't cured you yet. We all know that this can heal by itself, but the procedures we have to resort to are very painful. But you probably would be in more pain otherwise. The drug you are currently on is keeping the pain away, but it will eventually kill you," the Arbiter said slowly.

"Then I give permission to operate," Nico said. A long moment went by, neither saying a word.

"You're going to go through hell, I'm sure," the Arbiter said.

Nico didn't say anything.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1600 hours, March 24, 2553*** (UNSC Official Time** **Mountains (Forerunner containment facility),** **unknown location, Installation 03.****

The Master Chief was walking toward the watch when Nico was transported. The Master Chief saw him get wheeled into a makeshift operating room. The Arbiter walked up to him as he looked.

"He chose the operation. I must admit, I'm surprised," the Arbiter said.

"This is his choice," the Master Chief stated.

"But still," the Arbiter trailed off. The Master Chief left him with his thought. He arrived at the watch and grabbed a beam rifle. He sighted around the base for half-an-hour, peering into the scope and checking for Flood. After that, a marine took over his post and the Master Chief had a little free time. He went to the infirmary. When he arrived, he saw that Nico had successfully survived the surgery and was reading a pad.

"Master Chief!" he yelled and saluted. The Master Chief noticed that he was much faster now. Was that a side effect?

"At ease," he said. His motion detector picked up a friendly behind him. Instinctively, he knew it was the Arbiter. Nico gave a respectful bow.

"At ease," the Arbiter said. He strode over to the bed and picked up the other pad, which was his medical record.

"You had an eye problem?" he asked.

"The doctor said I had a depth-perspective problem that he cured during the operation," the Sangheili responded.

"And how long do you believe you had this problem?" he continued.

"I believe all my life, Arbiter," Nico said. He was following the Arbiter's request of saying his name.

"So that's why you got faster," the Master Chief said.

"Yes, sir," Nico said. "The medic also said I needed a day's bed rest, but I don't think I—" Nico was cut off by the pounding of hooves on metal. A squad of Elites ran by in the hallway. The Master Chief grabbed one of them and pulled him aside.

"What's going on?" he asked.

"Flood are entering the ruins from inside!" the trooper asked. The Chief let him go and he sprinted away.

"Chief! This must be a containment facility!" Cortana said. She was very quiet, as she was busy with other tasks.

"We have to evacuate," the Arbiter said.

"Uh, problem," Nico groaned, pointing at himself. They would have to get Nico out also.

"Here," the Master Chief said, throwing him a shotgun. The Arbiter took a wheelchair and the other Sangheili sat in it. The Arbiter quickly wheeled him toward the hanger, the Master Chief following. When they arrived, they saw that Flood were everywhere. But these were the new Flood, the ones that had electronic implants. The Chief couldn't wonder how they had gotten that way.

"Arbiter, go back! We were using that room back there as a kitchen. It also leads to another hanger," Nico said, handing him the pad. The Master Chief saw a map of the facility.

As if a switch had been flung, Flood started attacking. Nico, now quick as lightning, dropped a lit grenade two feet ahead of them, closed the door, and rammed the controls with his shotgun. An explosion sounded behind it. A few seconds went by with much ramming on the door. Then a thin sliver of plasma started cutting through.

"We have to go," the Chief said. The Arbiter started pushing the wheelchair, but Nico got up and told him it would take too long. Several more jammed doors later, they found themselves in the kitchen, with the ominous fog that seemed to follow large groups of Flood. The Master Chief split up for the other two and started hunting for Flood. He entered a larger hallway and found three Flood types on each side of him. The Chief started firing, but the Arbiter quickly joined the fray. But more and more Flood came—"where the

hell was Nico?

The answer came in an instant. Flood beings dropped instantly as knives started flying by the Chief and Arbiter and hitting the enemy in the heads. The entire group of Flood soon fell. They saw Nico next to a cart filled with nothing but knives. They instantly thanked him and escaped to another hanger. Thankfully, there was no Flood yet. But there would be soon. The Master Chief looked around the hanger, noticing the wreckage from a previous battle—wait, was that the shape of a Warthog?

Sure enough, it was. He started digging it out, the two Sangheili helping him. When it was cleared, they looked at a Warthog in pristine condition. Nico quickly got in the driver's seat, claiming that he was well trained in human vehicles. The Arbiter got shotgun and the Chief took the turret. Nico used a pistol to shoot a switch. The cavernous doors started to close and Nico whizzed through just in time.

"Excellent idea. That will keep the Flood in," The Arbiter said, praising Nico.

"That won't stop them completely. The Flood might find another way out, so we should get as far away as possible," Cortana said.

"Agreed," Nico said as he floored the pedal, the Warthog jumped over the sand dune, and disappeared behind it.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: That took me longer then I thought. R&R please.

6. Chapter 6

I am so busy nowadays; I'm surprised I got this chapter up. R&R pls.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****0800 hours, March 25, 2553 (UNSC Official Time), ****Forest (Near Silent Cartographer 03),****unknown location, Installation 03.****

The Master Chief had felt all the more pressured. The doctor was right about Nico having a day's bed rest: even though his injuries were fixed, using his vision was exhausting, so Nico had to rest as they drove in the night. But the Arbiter couldn't wake him up after that and neither of them knew why. But if Nico's condition was serious, then they would have to find help fast.

Cortana had intercepted a message during the night from the other Elites. They were meeting up at a new location. She used satellite maps to determine the location and uploaded a NAV point 200 hundred kilometers away. The Warthog didn't look like it, but it was fast. It would have covered that distance easily. They would soon approach it.

The Master Chief finally felt relief as a facility with Ghosts,

Banshees, and Phantoms in the hanger appeared through the foliage. The Master Chief steered it in. Elites who were on guard drew their weapons as they ran over. When they saw who it was, they put away the guns.

"Sangheili, this one is hurt, and we don't know why," the Arbiter called out. With the help of the guards, they moved Nico to the new infirmary. The doctor examined Nico quickly and simply said that Nico using his new vision was exhausting. Both didn't have time to wait for more, as they needed to go figure out a plan to destroy this Halo. But how?

They arrived in record time and sat down. An Elite, Nore'n, was in charge of ground operations. She slid a pad over to them, which detailed the options they had.

The first option said to use the plasma reactors aboard the Shadow of Intent. The Master Chief instantly saw a flaw with the plan. The plasma reactor wouldn't work alone. And they still had no way of getting off the ring.

The second option was to destroy Halo using itself. There were no details on how that could work.

The third and final option stated that they use the Phantoms to escape the ring and scout the planet for anything they could use. This one was close to impossible. The entire planet was infested. Who knew how much the Gravemind would have expanded?

And that was it. Would they all be doomed to live on this world and rebuild life here? Was there any other option?

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****TIME ANOMOLY estimated 0830 hours (Unknown Race Time),***Forest (Silent Cartographer 03),***unknown location, Installation 03.****

Sufiyan sat there, having nothing to do but live with his own thoughts. The entire group did. Sufiyan had no idea as to how long they had been living life on this mysterious ring that orbited his planet. No idea as to how long they had to revert to more primitive ways to live life.

His group had set up a residence in a facility with the ring's map for what must have been ages now. It was the only piece of technology they had. But everyday seemed to move slower. This day was no different.

Sufiyan looked around at his group. There was Chris, normally reserved, Michael, normally active, Dylan, normally annoying, Nate, normally interesting, and Sean, who was normally restless.

However, things hadn't been normal for a long time. If there were other Forerunners out there, he did not know. None of them did. All were always silent, unless someone wanted to talk about their lives on the planet. But they were so unsure of the name, they held on to other memories tightly, fearing that one day, they may lose them.

Sufiyan silently got up, his motions fluid, quieter then the silence they lived with. He walked over to the map. He looked at the surrounding forest for Flood forms. Nothing, there was still no change since they had taken up residence here.

Well, almost. As Sufiyan put the map on a setting for thermal imaging, he saw that the nearby facility had many readings. He zoomed into the structure and found a strange creature. They were unlike anything he had ever seen. Could they be another Flood form? No, that wasn't true. The way they all moved were far too organized. And there was one that didn't look anything like the others. He wore green armor, and it seemed to have a fluidic sense to it. But Sufiyan couldn't register more in his mind. Being alone all this time didn't give any way to react to this discovery. He sat down and went back to the meditation they all did.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****0900 hours, March 25, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time),***Forest (Unknown Facility near Silent Cartographer 03),***unknown location, Installation 03.****

The Arbiter trudged back toward the infirmary. The meeting was useless. The only thing they could decide was to send scouts out to investigate the surrounding forest. They were no closer to escaping and destroying Halo. It was frustrating.

The Arbiter turned the corner and all his frustration disappeared in both relief and shock. Nico was finally up. But just why was a shotgun floating next to him? The Arbiter didn't see any anti-gravity devices.

"Arbiter!" Nico said, saluting. It was hard to bow in bed.

"At ease, young one," the Arbiter said. The doctor walked in and did the same routine Nico had just did.

"At ease. But why is a shotgun floating next to Nico?" the Arbiter asked.

"The reason is that Nico is naturally telepathic," the doctor said.

"Pardon me?" The Arbiter asked.

"Well, I think that the injury being cured wasn't the only thing tiring him. He'll be fine with it now. But he was also using this 'telepathy' during the drive. Do you remember anything that happened during the drive?" the doctor said. The Arbiter thought hard and came up with an answer.

"There were several places we encountered that we told Nico to go around, but he continued over and never failed," he said.

"Then that was when he was using telepathy. I'm having Nico use the shotgun to improve fatigue. He is almost done also," the doctor finished.

"One more surprise in the young Sangheili," the Arbiter said. Suddenly, his com crackled.

"Scout AA-05 calling in to the Arbiter," a Sangheili said. The Arbiter had said that no scout should call him unless it was for a good reason.

"This is the Arbiter," he spoke in the com.

"You might want to bring several vehicles here," the Sangheili said.

"What is it?"

"There are humans on this construct."

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: OMG! A cliffhanger! I got lucky in putting this chapter up, so it may be a while before I put another chapter. In the meantime, R&R! Not sure what others will think of this chapter.

7. Chapter 7

NH3: OMG! The next chapter! Sorry it took so long! Essays and all that! R&R! Read the random disclaimer! Why the hell do all my sentences have exclamation points?!?!

DISCLAIMER: I do not own the Rabid Fangirl Army that has been hunting down me and SAQ!

Oh! I just remembered! Some people have said that the game ended in 2552! That was Halo 2, everyone! Some people really need to buy a 360!

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****0910 hours, March 25, 2553 (UNSC Official Time), ****Forest (****near****ing**** Silent Cartographer 03),****unknown location, Installation 03.****

Cortana was confused. This only happened when the processors couldn't calculate a reason for something. And the fact that humans were on this construct wasn't backed by anything. She had scanned the ring, and there were no crash sites, no prowlers had answered a hail. Did she miss something important, something that she overlooked again? It was the most possible reason, but it could also be the most unlikely. It wasn't easy for her to just miss something.

She quickly changed her focus to the road ahead, through John's helmet. Whatever the explanation, she would have to see these humans herself. As the convoy of Spectres and Ghosts moved toward a facility ahead, she checked map data from the first Halo. The terrain was entirely different, but the coordinates of the first Silent Cartographer matched their location. Acting on this information, she could assume that they were heading for the same thing.

"Chief, you may need to know that, based on coordinates from other

rings and also this ring, we could be near the Cartographer that lies on this ring. I'll upload a NAV point of the probable location," she said.

"Do it," The Chief said.

She did so and quickly checked the medical readings of John's team. The Spartan had a good reading. The Arbiter had an anxious look about him, and it was proven by his slightly accelerated heartbeat and a slight perspiration reading. Nico had managed to come along. He had finished his therapy just in time to join them. His signs showed some fatigue, but other than that, he looked fine.

"Cortana, we are approaching the facility. Is there anything at long sensor range?" John said.

"There is some Flood, but they are quite a way off, Chief. You have plenty of time," she said.

"Let's hope so."

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****0915 hours, March 25, 2553 (UNSC Official Time),***Forest (Silent Cartographer 03),***unknown location, Installation 03.****

Nico looked up and whistled, something that was very rare for an Elite. The Master Chief couldn't help but agree. Compared to the first Halo's Cartographer, this one towered many stories high. The Chief still knew that it couldn't compare to the Ark's.

"Inside, Chief," the Arbiter called out from a nearby entrance. The Master Chief complied, sticking his rifle out for any possible targets. There were only a few Elites guarding at the bottom. Almost instantly, the Master Chief felt the urge to bring down every Elite. But he shouldn't. There was a truce between two races and even then, he was on the wrong end of too much firepower. He walked past, not really caring if they bowed to him or not.

They took the nearby lift up to the top. The Master Chief noticed how easy it was now to get to the map room.

At the top, they walked down a hallway and into a room. Several Elites were already there. And there were humans there also.

"Chief, I have conducted a scan of the humans. They are not exactly like us inside," Cortana said. The Master Chief looked over the scans and saw that the digestive systems, blood, and nervous systems were very different. There was a mouth, an esophagus, a stomach, and the small intestine, but that was it. No large intestine or liver. The blood was also green instead of the red of humans, or the blue of Elites. The nervous systems were by far the weirdest. The nervous systems seemed to reach many more parts of the body. It could probably stop muscles that usually couldn't stop for whatever the reason.

So they weren't human. This made everything all the more interesting. As they walked in, all the Elites bowed to the Chief, the Arbiter, Nico, and the soldier the Chief probably thought was a holy guard.

John also noticed that the 'humans' quickly followed suite and bowed also. This shattered the hope that they were still human. Humans saluted, they didn't bow.

"You mind if we ask some questionsâ€|?" Nico said.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I'm Sufiyan. My comrades are Chris, Michael, Dylan, Nate and Sean," he said as he pointed to each of them. Each bowed again as they were listed.

"So you are humans. You have human names," Cortana said.

"Oh, no. We don't even know what a humans is, ma'am. Is he one?" the one named Michael said, pointing at the Arbiter. The Arbiter gave a huff.

"No. He is though," the Arbiter said, pointing to the Master Chief.

"He?" Dylan asked. They had only heard Cortana from the armor.

"No, there is an AI in the armor," the Master Chief said.

"If you aren't humans, then what are you?" Nico asked.

"We are Forerunners. We come from the nearby planet, although it is now infested by those killer zombies," Sufiyan answered.

"Wait, then YOUR civilization created the Flood!" Nico exclaimed.

"Flood?" Chris said.

"The killer zombies," Cortana said dryly.

"Thanks. But just how can we create this race and put it on the ring before we sent our first colony ship here?" Sufiyan retorted.

"Guys, I think I know why," Cortana said. "I think these ARE Forerunners, but they are a more primitive form. More then us. And they may be the last," Cortana said.

"I agree," said three voices. Two of them belonged to Nico and Sufiyan. The other didn't seem to have a source. At that moment, the entire situation turned into chaos.

"Arbiter! Increased Flood activity in the area! My god! They are everywhere!" said an unknown Elite over the COM. The Chief heard screams before several Infection Forms ambushed them, taking down several Elites. Nico tossed a bag filled with plasma rifles to the Forerunners. They quickly started to fire, but they were quickly outmatched.

"Retreat to the elevator! NOW!" Nico yelled. They entire group ran, the Chief, Arbiter, Nico, and Sufiyan trailing far behind, holding them off. Before they could reach it, however, the lift quickly traveled down into the depths.

"Arbiter, the lift isn't in our control!" yelled an Elite over the COM. 20 seconds later by the mission clock, the shaft exploded. The

heat made many Flood burst into flames and fall down dead. Nico saw a shaft on the opposite end of the shaft.

"In there!" Nico yelled. They all dove in, sliding down along the sides. Then, abruptly, it ended in sheer, never-ending darkness. They all fell downâ€¦downâ€¦downâ€¦

HALO*HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO**

0930* hours, March 25, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time),***Unknown Terrain***Beneath ***Silent Cartographer 03),***unknown location, Installation 03.**

WHAM! The Arbiter rubbed his aching arms as he got up. The others did the same.

"Who is that?" Sufiyan asked. They all turned and immediately gasped.

"Iâ€¦am theâ€¦Prophet of Regretâ€¦hierarch of the Covenantâ€¦most supreme!" said the very same person.

HALO*HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO**

NH3: Ah, the evil cliffhanger. Took me forever to think of this. R&R people, otherwise you will be bored.

8. Chapter 8

NH3: I must have gone to update every week. Anyway, please review. You all must be dying to see what's next. Well, the adventure ends here, but doesn't end here. You'll see what I mean.

HALO*HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO**

0930 hours, March 25, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time),*Unknown Terrain (Beneath Silent Cartographer 03),***unknown location, Installation 03.**

Right after the Prophet finished his sentence, the Master Chief and Nico whipped out their weapons.

"Don't shoot!" Regret cried out.

"You died. I killed you in that temple. How did you survive that?" the Master Chief said, his voice quiet.

"It isâ€¦trueâ€¦I died in the templeâ€¦but youâ€¦saw me againâ€¦so did youâ€¦Arbiterâ€¦" the prophet strained his voice too far and erupted into hacks and coughs.

"I am no Arbiter of you," the Arbiter snarled, holding up a Plasma Rifle.

"Thenâ€¦your raceâ€¦never believed inâ€¦the Great Journeyâ€¦and its promisesâ€¦" he responded.

"You still haven't answered my question," the Chief voiced.

"Humanity shouldâ€¦"

"Answer the dang question!" Nico yelled. At least that's what the Arbiter thought. He might have yelled 'damn' instead.

"Alrightâ€¦hereticâ€¦I will answerâ€¦Before my resting placeâ€¦became my pyreâ€¦the parasite made meâ€¦a hostâ€¦I told youâ€¦the true significanceâ€¦of the sacred ringsâ€¦but the parasiteâ€¦regarded itâ€¦as mere nonsenseâ€¦calling it 'containment'â€¦such a filthy wordâ€¦" he said, breathing in breaths of fatigue. The Arbiter showed no pity.

"Then came the eventsâ€¦on Earth and the Arkâ€¦and as the parasite perishedâ€¦it sent me awayâ€¦to here...through the holy flashesâ€¦" Regret said. He then erupted into more coughs.

"Then it was your doing that the Flood are already infesting the ring, and for these new types too!" Nico said. The Arbiter noticed Sufiyan standing to the side, wanting to stay out of this conversation. He let him be.

"The new formsâ€¦are part ofâ€¦a bigger planâ€¦but they areâ€¦more formidableâ€¦then theâ€¦Covenant ever wasâ€¦" Regret said. The Arbiter heard a slither in the darkness behind Regret.

"But Iâ€¦have nothingâ€¦to fearâ€¦my servants willâ€¦light the ringsâ€¦and those who still believeâ€¦shall be savedâ€¦while the restâ€¦perishâ€¦" Regret finished. Nico apparently foresaw what was coming, for he yelled 'Stop!' and ran at Regret. Regret began to disappear in rings of light, which were most certainly the teleportation systems of the ring. Nico disappeared into it as he ran.

"Nico!" the Arbiter cried out. It was too late; Nico had been catapulted across a short distance or unimaginable distances and his tag disappeared.

"We don't have time to go after him," Cortana said. "You heard the Prophet. He has sent the Flood to activate the ring. This ring will affect Earth and Sanghelios if we don't do something to stop it. I'm sorry Arbiter, but we will have to sacrifice Nico to save both races," Cortana said. The Arbiter remained silent. They all did, honoring their lost comrade. Then the Arbiter turned on his com.

"We're in the elevator shaft. Throw down three ropes," he said. The number seemed to hang in the air around them.

"Yes, Excellency," said an Elite on the com. As to haunt him forever, he remembered when he told Nico to use just 'Arbiter'. He might forever hate that memory.

HALO*HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO**

0200 hours, March 25, 2553 (UNSC Official Time),**Desert (Approaching Control Room 03),****unknown location, Installation 03.**

The plan began at 0100 hours. It would prevent the activation of Halo and it would end Halo.

The Master Chief looked out at the desert beneath the Phantom on the view screen. It seemed to yawn on forever. But there was one area that had the Forerunner metal on it, and it was coming up fast. The Master Chief saw squads of mindless Flood, but he had more attention focused on the speech the Arbiter was giving to the fleet of Phantoms that were headed toward the Control Room.

"Sangheili, this morning, we lost an important comrade, one of which we have been trying to save when we came here. We found the mind behind the Flood, but it was not the Gravemind. It was one of the leaders that corrupted our very way of thinking until recently. It was the Prophet of Regret. He sent the Flood to do what the Covenant had been trying to have us do. Sangheili, they are going to activate the rings!"

A murmur ran through the passengers of every Phantom.

"Sadly, he escaped in the rings teleportation system, taking Nico with him. Nico is now Missing in Action, presumed dead. But our focus right now is to stop the activation of the rings. Nico's sacrifice to try and stop Regret would be dishonored if we did not take further steps to prevent our deaths. Sangheili, we are here to stop the rings. Even if it means our deaths, we will still charge forward, bringing down any parasite in our way. We will stop the rings, we will save our races and we will honor our commander's death!" the Arbiter finished. All the Elites gave a battle cry for Nico's death and their task ahead. The Master Chief felt the Phantom dip as they began to descend toward the ground. They leveled out and the hatch opened. At the sight ahead of them, John couldn't be more shocked.

There was an army of Flood to get through. There were Infection Forms crawling around at the feet of Combat Forms, each with dangerous weapons, and also Carrier Forms, one of them occasionally exploding. There were even higher forms of Flood, like the Pure Forms, some huge and gorilla-like, some spider like and posing as turrets. And the newest Cyber Forms, as they were called. They were more formidable than ever. And all were focused on doing Regret's bidding: Wiping out the only ones that stood between life and death.

The Master Chief looked back at the vehicles they had brought. They had secured as many as they could on the phantoms. They had even tied Ghosts on the top and Spectres on the bottom. That was one advantage. Another was the plasma weapons they had. But the odds were still lopsided.

"We are going to get through this," Cortana said.

The Phantoms all landed, unloaded all the passengers, and then took off and hovered overhead. The total number of Phantoms were many, the army even more so. But around 500 soldiers against 5,000 Flood forms encompassing a circumference of three miles still seemed suicidal.

"Well, here we go," the Arbiter said as he lifted a launcher. But it was no ordinary launcher. This held the equivalent of a nuke, but a lot less harmful in terms of radiation. That didn't mean it wasn't powerful though. There was only one shot. It would probably be the only thing that could help them in such impossible odds. The Arbiter lifted it, fired, and a ball of glowing plasma soared over the distance between the huge armies. It landed in the middle of the Flood, exploded, and a huge chunk was opened straight to the control room.

That was around 1,660 Flood Forms already dead. The Master Chief saw Elites cut down the vehicles. He and the Arbiter quickly took advantage and fired them to full speed. They began the huge distance to the control room. It was so huge that the many other Flood that still remained might have time to reach them and engage in close combat. They couldn't let that happen.

There was a very long silence broken by the engines as they traveled the distance. They were 700 meters away from the entrance when they began to hear Flood Forms growling and screaming in hunger. Phantoms fired to buy some time, but they were guaranteed their chance. They were going to make it.

They soared up a ramp and crashed into a door. The Master Chief and the Arbiter found it had been forced open, and a green-glowing orb lay, circuits still sparking, nearby. It kept repeating the same line over and over as they rushed in:

"Helloâ€|I amâ€|Containmentâ€|breached," it said repeatedly. They paid no mind to it. They rushed in and opened fire on the many Flood Forms inside. There were only a few. They looked around for the Index and saw it floating in a beam of light below the platform. Would removing it stop the ring? The Arbiter said yes, and with John's help, the Arbiter managed to grab it.

"Got it!" he said. There was a great shaking, the detonation ceased, and a beacon turned on.

"What is this?" the Master Chief asked the question. He had never seen it, but he instinctively knew what it was, so the Arbiter said nothing. Finally, he spoke.

"In memory of those fallenâ€|" he said.

"Arbiter, we are picking up Human and Sangheili ship signals," the com crackled.

"Yes. There is only one thing left to do," he nodded to the Chief, who set up a nuke in the middle, by the beam of light. That was how they would destroy Halo. They had been setting up nukes in several crucial spots all over the ring, so that they could destroy the ring. This Control Room was the last location needed.

"Let's get away from here, Chief," Cortana said.

Too late! The Flood was already occupying the entrance. The Arbiter secured the Index and they ran upward toward the top. Several channels came in saying that the remaining soldiers were picked up and they were searching for the Chief and Arbiter. They emerged on

the top of the huge Control Room and, with hesitation, they threw a plasma grenade at a Phantom to get its attention. It turned, saw them, and turned again to let them aboard. They quickly climbed on and the fleet of Phantoms rocketed out of the atmosphere.

"Prime them," the Chief said. Behind them, several explosions all went off, damaging the ring and, slowly, it tore itself apart.

"Mission complete," the Arbiter said. "The ideas you and Cortana had worked."

"Yeah, but we aren't done yet," John said. The Prophet of Regret was still out there.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: It seems that in the books, a battle like that doesn't have much talk. But that beacon is still transmitting, so the destruction of the other Halos is now a priority. But where did Regret go? And what happened to Nico? And what is the plan behind these new Flood Forms? Stay tuned, this story isn't over yet. Meanwhile, R&R if you put this story on alert and favs.

9. Chapter 9

NH3: This story has most of my time today. Anyway, R&R please.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****18***00 hours, March 25, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time),
Seeker of Truth**** (Approaching Sanghelios),**_**nearing
Urs System, in Slipspace.**_**

_The Arbiter felt very weird being the new commander of the _Seeker of Truth._ It was the ship that replaced _Ascendant Justice_, _his command before becoming the Arbiter. He remembered how he met John for the first time on hostile conditions. He had been thrown back into a lifeboat. The fact it was considered heresy no longer bothered him though._

_He had just come to his new quarters and reviewed the debriefing. He told his story while the others told theirs. Apparently, the stowaway Brutes weren't the cause of the engine failure. A pocket in space had formed and the _Shadow of Intent_ had been dumped into it, which disabled the Slipspace Drive. So they had appeared into this new dimension, where they had found Spartan-117, who was dumped into it by a malfunctioning portal that malfunctioned completely and gave a direct path to another Halo. That wasn't his concern right now, however._

_His concern was the chip on a string around his neck. It held all the files of every member of the _Shadow of Intent's_ crew. This included Nico's. The Arbiter had no way of knowing where he could be. He could be on another Halo, or he might have perished on a different part of the Halo they were on. The Arbiter slotted it into the personal computer by the bed and scanned through it, looking for

Nico's name. He found it and marked him as MIA. Then, he used his own pass codes to enter his account._

"Wow," he whispered as he found everything with high security. He would need Cortana's help for this. He quickly typed up a message to her.

"Arbiter?" she asked.

"Cortana, bypass the security locks on Nico's files and open a door for me," he said.

"Done," Cortana immediately responded. The barriers fell away. But for all the security, there were only battle reports, personal lettersâ€"why would anyone put such a high security measure on this?

"Arbiter, I've read the files, and apparently, they all have a pattern. So it's a code to find a hidden file," the AI said.

"What is this code?" he asked.

"All together it says this," she said as she pulled up a file with the line on it.

"Your Truth is a lair. Find the eight activation points and the one shield," the Arbiter repeated. "Cortana, try using this as a key into all files, anything."

"Done. There are ten files unlocked in the system. I will pull them up," Cortana said. The Arbiter saw files with pictures of a Forerunner structure. He recognized it as the device used to generate the portal to the Ark. Somehow, Nico had gotten the chance to translate the symbols into a string of syllables. There was a beep as Cortana opened a star map and translated the first set of coordinates into a destination outside the galaxy. It had to belong to the Ark. The next seven files were translated into locations of the rings. The second-to-last one, which had to be the 'shield', pointed to a location that was held in the hands of both places, but there was still a lack of data. He would have to investigate this later.

"The Arbiter opened the final file and gasped. He didn't know how he had done it, but Nico had found a way to contact the computer. The following message was displayed.

"Arbiter, if you are reading this, then you have went into my files and found out the locations of every other Halo in the galaxy. There was also a 'shield world' that I had no knowledge of, so it was left mostly blank. If you are wondering how I got this information, then I had gotten it after the Ark events. At sighting this, I had to keep it a secret. There was no way to destroy them without tremendous sacrifices, and the possibility of another huge war. However, the humans have created the NOVA bomb, a 'planet killer'. This is our best chance of destroying the Halos. I have figured out that I am on Installation 06, so find me there. Nico."

"The Arbiter sat back for a moment, in a daze at the fact that Nico wasn't dead. Then, using the same data chip, dumped everything on it, loaded the hidden files he had found, and than laced it around his neck. He walked straight to the bridge.

_ "Officer, prepare a new course," he said upon entering._

_ "Excellency?" the officer said._

_ "Cortana, give him the coordinates," the Arbiter continued. The officer started to plot their new course. The door opened and the Master Chief walked onto the bridge._

_ "I felt a change in movement. Is everything alright?" he asked._

_ "Cortana, tell them," he said._

_ "Nico was several steps ahead of us. He had determined the location of the remaining Halos before he went MIA. He had also contacted the ship, saying which installation he was on. We are going after him, and we are going to try and destroy the Halos also," she said. There was a long silence._

_ "Let's bring him home, Sangheili!" the Arbiter yelled._

_ **HALO****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****_

_ **1100 hours, April 6****, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time),
Seeker of Truth**** (Approaching ****Installation
06**_**unnamed location****, in Slipspace.**_

__The entire journey had taken over a week to make, even with the Sangheili engines. They were almost upon the ring, and the Arbiter felt extremely jittery. He had considered Nico a real friend, and he wanted to see him again.__

__"Two minutes before dropping out of Slipspace, Excellency," the NAV officer said.__

__"Thank you," the Arbiter said. He leaned back in his chair, reviewing the Halo files. He had done that every day for a while now. Saving Nico wasn't the only task they had ahead. They had to also destroy the final installations, thus preventing an untimely future for the galaxy. It was a task that had been thrust into their hands. And they were going to complete it.__

__"Dropping out of Slipspace," the officer said. The Arbiter snapped out of his thoughts and looked on the view screen. There was the ring, in between a planet and a moon. But both were colonized byâ€|__

__"Cyber Forms, on both worlds, over 9 billion of them" Cortana said.__

__"Plot a course toward the ring," the Arbiter said to Cortana. No response. "Cortana?"__

__"Increased activity near the rings!" she responded. On the view screen, a brilliant white light shined inside the ring's surfaces.__

__"Some one has activated it!" the Arbiter stated. They couldn't do anything about it. They could only hope that a miracle would happen. It did, and the white light shone even brighter and then blinked out. The ring started to glow from the inside.__

__"There was too much energy built up! It's going to blow itself up!" Cortana cried out. Readings went off the charts as the ring heated up, until finally, the ring tore itself to superhot pieces.__

__"Nico!" was all the Arbiter said.__

__"Excellency, I'm picking up something," the NAV officer said.__

__"Zoom in on it," the Arbiter said. The view screen jumped forward and they saw a Phantom, still purple. It was heavily damaged and it was heading for the moon.__

__"Don't crash there!" pull up! pull up!" the Arbiter muttered as the Phantom continued its course. It didn't turn, and soared into the moon's atmosphere, churning up flames.__

__"We have to rescue them, before they find them," the Arbiter said.__

__**HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO**__

__NH3: Ohhh, another cliffhanger! R&R please. I had to bargain for this chapter.__

__ __

10. Chapter 10

NH3: Halo 3 is addicting. R&R.

Disclaimer: I do not own the Nazis or racism!

HALO*HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO**

**1200 hours, April 6, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time),
****Phantom****(Unregistered) (****moon near Installation 06),
****unnamed location.**

It had taken an hour to get everything ready. A full hour in which they could have been attacked and infected. But no such thing had happened to Nico. He was lucky; he had found former heretics who had discovered the ring before he did and had been protecting the Control Room. The Flood almost succeeded in activating this one under Regret's control. Not surprisingly, Regret had escaped again. He was in their grasp but escaped through the teleportation system and disabled it at the same time. Nico's next task lay in front of him: Safety.

"Nico, we have finished," said a heretic Elite. His name was Fual'na. It was the sort of name any Elite should have, but Nico's was human for some reason.

"Good, several Cyber Forms have made an appearance by those hills. About halfway in between, there is a cave. Your scans proved useful: the planet has a system of caves beneath its surface that we can hide in. Like a hive for the former inhabitants, but forgotten by the Flood," Nico said. He was very good at such observations and research.

"We will have to move quickly," Fual'na said. "I will prepare the Sangheili."

"I will scout it out and plant mines for the Flood," Nico said. Fual'na could hardly protest this before Nico ran off. There was no way Fual'na could catch him. The speed was far too great.

It took just under seven minutes for Nico to run the mile to the cave. He panted softly and lay down several mines on the ground beyond the cave. No digging needed for mindless zombies. He turned into the cave, eager to explore.

It was only a few minutes before Nico found that the Forerunners had been tied with this planet also. He felt his legs walking on the circular beam of light with him inside. They connected several tunnels that had been severed at some point. Nico came to a fork, took out a long needle from his Needler, and placed it at the entrance. He walked down, holding up his Carbine, in case any spare Flood would jump at him.

Suddenly, Nico heard a huge explosion. The mines had detonated. Almost instantly, Fual'na and his team ran next to Nico.

"They have our position," he yelled. Nico ran as he saw several Infection Forms trailing them.

"Whatever you do, don't split!" Nico yelled, but it was too late. The group had separated into several groups and gone down different tunnels. Nico and Fual'na were alone. Nico spotted an opening.

"This way!" he yelled. He bashed through the door, slipped, and then slid all the way down a chute. He heard Fual'na behind him, throwing a plasma grenade at the doorway. It sailed through as the door closed. Yellow gore spraying on the windows and the door was disabled. They were safe for the moment.

"More Forerunner remnants," Nico said. They looked around them in awe as the super-hard walls surrounded them. Fual'na was the first to recover.

"Let's see what is further down this passage," he said.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1220 hours, April 6, 2553 (UNSC Official Time), ****Phantom**** (FG-92), (moon near Installation 06),****unnamed location.****

The Master Chief looked below him at the landscape. There were thousands of Flood, each ambling every which way, sometimes tearing up another for food. They scrambled over the wreckage, exploring it's mechanics to see if they could use it. The Master Chief looked away;

the sight looked awful.

He instead turned his attention to the tracking system. They detected Nico's broadcasting tag a while ago. He was underground and his vitals did not show anything to be dangerous. The device gave a rapid beeping as they passed over a spot in the desert.

"Here," he said. The pilot turned the craft and landed. The Flood were a half-mile away, so they had some time. Nevertheless, the Phantom dropped two Ghosts to help fight if they were attacked. After several minutes of searching for an entrance, the Arbiter finally noticed something.

"Look!" he said, pointing. There were faint tracks that resembled Elite feet in the sand. The Master Chief looked on ahead and saw the cave.

"They must be in there," the Master Chief said. The Arbiter quickly called the Phantom to bring the Ghosts back up and also provide close combat weapons. Now the entire party each had an Energy Sword, a Mauler, and a Plasma Rifle. With this new weaponry, they journeyed inside. The passage had several light bridges connecting severed tunnels. It was around this time that they came across the first fork.

"The stench of Flood lies here," an Elite said. The Master Chief agreed; he could smell it too.

"Sangheili, be prepared," the Arbiter called out. They then found the next problem: which path should they take? Nico's position showed him lower, in a location between the fork. That didn't help.

"Wait, what is that?" Cortana said. She put a NAV point to help John find the ammo from a Needler.

"They must have gone that way," she concluded. The Chief agreed. They turned a corner and found gore of Flood and Elites, burns on the walls, and slashes in random spots.

"There was a battle here," the Arbiter said as he looked at tracks heading in all directions. "Is Nico fast?"

"Very," another Elite said.

"Then these must be his tracks," he finished. When the Chief looked, he saw that the tracks definitely looked like someone was running really fast. They lead to a door that was disabled. They quickly pried it apart and slid down. Upon landing, they quietly walked on through several walls and areas. The strangest thing about it was that there wasn't a single battle sign and that everything appeared Forerunner. And it seemed far too quiet.

It was a while before they came close to Nico's position. He hadn't moved this whole time and his vitals were strong. Something was definitely wrong here.

The leading Elites of the team turned a corner ahead of them, froze, and then ducked back.

"Excellency, you might want to see this," one said.

"Our problems have gotten a whole lot worse," said the other.

"Let us see," the Arbiter said, although it seemed quieter. His head poked around the corner, along with the Master Chief's. This view confirmed their new problem.

The Prophet of Regret was sitting on a throne with dozens of Flood around him. And two Elites were held captive by a gravity system. The tracker proved that one of them was Nico.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: I'm so sorry this one was late! I had so many problems in writing this.

11. Chapter 11

NH3: I'm killing myself nowadays. R&R anyway.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****United Nations Space Command ALPHA PRIORITY TRANSMISSION
04638Z-83****

****Encryption Code: **Black**

****Public Key: **None**

****From:** Vice Admiral Margaret Parangosky, Temporary Commanding Officer of _Point of No Return _/(UNSC Service Number CLASSIFIED)**

****To: **Lord Terrence Hood, Commanding Officer of ODA-142 Cairo Station / (Service Number CLASSIFIED)**

****Subject: **NOVA BOMB MALFUNCTION**

****Classification: **Restricted (BGX Directive)**

/start file/

NOVA BOMB SHIPMENT HAS MALFUNCTIONED AND IS COUNTING DOWN. BLAST RADIUS IS STILL WITHIN RANGE OF EARTH. REDLINING REACTORS, BUT HUGE POSSIBILITY EARTH WILL BE DESTROYED. ALL SURVIVORS OF COVENANT WAR SHOULD EVACUATE.

ITEM: MAJOR INTERFERENCE FROM LOCATION IN SPACE. TAGS INDICATE IT TO BE NASSAU STATION. INTERFERENCE MOST LIKELY COMING FROM FORERUNNER ARTIFACT, MOST LIKELY DEEP-SPACE ARTIFACT.

ITEM: ARTIFACT KNOCKED OUT SEVERAL AI'S. _Point of No__ R__eturn_ IS BEING OPERATED MANUALLY.

ITEM: MECHANICS OF NOVA BOMBS AFFECTED AND INITIATED COUNTDOWN.

CONCLUSION: MAJOR DANGER TO EARTH. BEGIN EVACUATION

/end
file/

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1240 hours, April 6, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili***Time), Underground Forerunner Caverns, (moon near Installation 06), ***unnamed location.****

The Arbiter understood the extent of the problem at hand. They were outnumbered and outgunned heavily. They couldn't win this fight, unless a miracle happened. The Arbiter listened to the speech Regret was giving.

"Your race was never meant to follow the holy path. We will activate the rings, and you will be consumed by the Flood, yet you won't join us," he said.

"BS to that," a Sangheili said behind him. The Arbiter shushed him.

"Why would we want to follow the false truths you gave us?" the other Sangheili said.

"Then you will not join us, but we will execute you and leave you for the Flood," the Prophet said. The Arbiter noticed that his mind had been partially taken over. He got to the point a lot more then before.

"Look!" said another Sangheili. The Arbiter saw a half-Brute, half-Flood walk out of the shadows, grinning evilly. He saw him lift up a Gravity Hammer. The execution was already proceeding! The Brute put his hammer on the chest of the other Sangheili, lifted up, then smashed down with incredible force, multiplied tenfold by the hammer. The Sangheili flew across the room and landed in the shadows, not four feet away from the Arbiter's feet. He was still alive, but most of his bones were broken and he was bleeding badly. The Arbiter snuck over, but saw the next hard choice he had to make: Who should he save?

As the Brute leveled the hammer at Nico's chest, the Arbiter's mind rushed. He had no idea if he could save Nico now. He had come all this way for nothing. Then a miracle happened.

Nico was released from the anti-gravity system holding him. He dropped down and rolled forward, right in between the hammer and the Brute-Flood combination. The hammer swung down and missed him, and at that moment, Nico jumped up and punched the face. The Gravity Hammer dropped from his hands and the beast was momentarily stunned, which gave Nico time to kick away some Flood trying to attack. The Arbiter was stunned by these events, but came back to reality when he realized Nico needed backup.

"Sangheili, supporting fire!" he yelled. The team began to cut down the Flood Forms. The Arbiter made a rush for Regret, but he disappeared into a column of yellow rings. Damn! The Arbiter saw that he had left behind a computer. He attached the chip he had to it and started to download the files as fast as possible. As the download

proceeded, the Arbiter saw a few Sangheili dragging Nico's companion into cover, cutting down Flood as they did, the Spartan shooting as many as he could, and Nico fighting hand-to-hand with the Brute.

Nico was playing defensive, blocking moves and using them against the beast. The Brute was pounding heavily on Nico, but was slowly taking damage. In one swift move, Nico got on the offensive and started hurting the half-Flood a lot. The Brute moved right, between two columns, which Nico used as a counterforce to reach the Brute again. His hit landed so hard, the brute was propelled back and had to flip to recover. The Brute tried landing a punch, but it implanted the wall. Nico grabbed its neck and ran toward the column, carrying the creature. The column broke as Nico threw the Brute into it. The Brute tried to get up, but failed, for Nico had grabbed the Gravity Hammer nearby and smashed it into the beast's head. It twitched once and lay still. Nico smashed it again so the Flood couldn't use it, then tossed the simple weapon aside.

"Thanks for coming," Nico said to the Arbiter, who was sitting by the computer amazed. Nico took the finished chip out and waved it in front of the Arbiter, who quickly snapped out of it and took it from Nico.

"Oh, um, you're welcome," he said. The Arbiter tossed an Energy Sword, which Nico expertly activated, and he activated his. They were going to cut their way out.

Several Flood Forms pounced at that moment, but it took twelve seconds to dispatch them. They ran back to the others, who were holding the Flood off.

"Fall back! Fall back!" the Arbiter yelled. The squad did so, carrying the badly hurt Sangheili who was with Nico, and escorting another, who had gotten his leg badly hurt. Nico grabbed a few grenades and tossed them back behind them. They were firebomb grenades Nico had taken from the Brute creature, and they turned the passageway behind them into a blazing inferno, Flood running into it and fueling the fire, extending it farther.

The squad continued to run. They ran outside of the cave after several turns and ran into the heat. Two warthogs the Sangheili had owned lay before them, one troop warthog, one turret warthog. They all got in, putting wounded into the troop car and having the fittest operate the turret car. The engines revved, and they sped out toward the landing zone.

"What happened to you?" the Arbiter asked Nico as they headed toward the Phantoms.

"I will have to tell you later," he responded.

"At least tell me how you escaped the anti-gravity system," the Arbiter pleaded.

"Alright, it took forever, but I had to use my telepathy to do so," Nico responded.

"I wouldn't be surprised if you got a promotion for such a tactic and talent," the Arbiter said. As they reached and entered the Phantoms

and flew away, the Arbiter realized something: he and Nico weren't only fellow officers. They were best friends

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: With every chapter I rework the plot and add stuff from Halopedia to make it a good read. Halopedia is good for anyone who is making a Halo 3 story. Google it! You will see how the message affects the storyline later. R&R please.

12. Chapter 12

NH3: Wow, I'm on a four good day streak right now and this story is helping a lot! R&R please.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****United Nations Space Command ALPHA PRIORITY TRANSMISSION
04640Z-83****

****Encryption Code: **Black**

****Public Key: **None**

****From:** Vice Admiral Margaret Parangosky, Temporary Commanding Officer of _Point of No Return _/(UNSC Service Number CLASSIFIED)**

****To: **Lord Terrence Hood, Commanding Officer of ODA-142 Cairo Station / (Service Number CLASSIFIED)**

****Subject: **DEEP-SPACE ARTIFACT**

****Classification: **Restricted (BGX Directive)**

/start file/

RETRIVAL TEAM SENT TO NASSAU STATION. MASSIVE RADIATION KILLED SPARTAN-458 OF FUTURE. RADIATION STILL EMITTING, BUT SMALL PULSES ONLY. DEEP-SPACE ARTIFACT HAS CREATED A SPACE INTERSECTING ALL POINTS OF TIME SIMUATANIOUSLY. IMPOSSIBLE TO CANCEL EFFECT ON NOVA BOMBS FROM ORIGIN POINT AND CONTROL PANAL. TIME ANOMALY DECREASED AMOUNT OF TIME UNTIL DETONATION. DANGER LEVEL IS CRITICAL!

/end
file/

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1500 hours, April 6, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), **_**Seeker of Truth**_**, heading toward Earth, in Slipspace.****

The Arbiter's prediction was correct: upon entering the ship, they were greeted by a high ranking Elite, at the same level as the Arbiter, but different name. On the spot, he awarded Nico with a medal for bravery and a prisoner-of-war ribbon. The Sangheili received these graciously, but when the team was bringing Fual'na to

the infirmary, Nico tore them off and stuffed them into his pocket.

"Receiving awards like these never feels right to me," explained Nico when the Arbiter looked at him strangely. After that, he didn't say more on the subject. The Arbiter suspected he got rid of them sometime later. They watched the surgery of Fual'na, but it wasn't anything happy; Fual'na died about halfway through the procedure. The Arbiter heard Nico curse quietly.

"Are you alright?" he asked.

"I'm fine," Nico responded. It was clear that he was mad about the death, so the Arbiter left him alone. Now he was heading to the bridge to retake command. When he entered, the commander's back was to him.

"I'm here to retake command," the Arbiter said. The next thing shocked him. The Sangheili turned around, revealing to be Nico. The Arbiter had left him behind and taken the most direct route to the bridge. He MUST be fast.

"Have you ever had someone measure your speed?" he asked. Nico laughed for the first time today.

"Thanks for cheering me up. It doesn't buy you anything, though," he said.

"What do you mean?" the Arbiter asked.

"I hate our AI. He was supposed to send you a message. Sufiyan and the others want to talk with you in the conference room," Nico answered.

"I'll go immediately," the Arbiter said. He left the bridge and took a short walk to the conference room. When he arrived, he took a deep breath and walked in.

"Finally," Sufiyan said. He was sitting at the conference table having a drink of water. The others were standing against the wall. "I have a request to make."

"Ask away," the Arbiter said.

"We have talked, stated our opinions, the usual business, and we have come to a conclusion," Sufiyan said, putting down his glass to make clear how serious he was. "It doesn't make sense how we can have the same name as the civilization who built these artifacts of incredible power. Could it have been a coincidence? Or could they be our ancestors? Whatever the answer, the only way we can find out is with some help. We have nowhere to go, so we would like to accompany you."

The Arbiter clenched his jaws at these words. Could they help them? They would have a lot to learn, but they could learn. The Arbiter made his decision.

"Yes, you may. Sufiyan, I hereby give you the rank of Junior Lieutenant, Grade 2 and the others Junior Lieutenants, Grade 1. I won't have common foot soldiers commanding you, especially since you

are now a part of my combat unit," the Arbiter replied. Sufiyan choked one these words.

"Such a high rank already?" he asked.

"It's my authority," the Arbiter responded.

"Thank you," Sufiyan said. The Arbiter left to return to the bridge. When he arrived, he found the bridge in a bustling activity that wasn't there before.

"What's going on?" the Arbiter asked.

"We just received a message from Earth. The NOVA bombs that were going to destroy the remaining Halos were activated by a strong interference, probably Nassau Station," Nico responded. He was frantically typing orders to increase speed and divert power. His fingers moved like a blur, a small piece of evidence of how fast he truly was.

"Nassau Station?" the Arbiter asked.

"When a ship known as the Apocalypso tumbled out of Slipspace due to the activation of a Forerunner artifact known as the Deep-Space Artifact, it created a 'bubble' in the space-time continuum and Nassau Station was engulfed by it. It now lies in Chawla Base, which is abandoned on the surface. But someone must have activated it." Cortana said. The Arbiter turned to see the Master Chief, Cortana in his armor.

"Okay, but there is a serious risk to Earth. It could be eliminated from the face of the universe. We have to help," Nico said. "Three minutes before dropping into normal space at a safe distance."

The three minutes passed by with an eerie silence, being broken only by the bustling of the officers at work. Finally, there was a great shuddering and Earth came into view on the screen.

We're on time. Full speed to Earth," Nico commanded. A full minute passed with Earth getting slowly bigger. Suddenly, there was a great flash, a loud explosion, and the ship shook so hard, it was thrown back in space. The Arbiter was tossed to the ground along with everyone else.

"What just happened?" Nico asked as everyone picked themselves up.

"We don't know," cried a NAV officer. "Proximity alert! Several huge asteroids coming at us! Brace for maneuver!" The ship began to roll and dodge in the asteroid's wake, a desperate attempt to avoid being destroyed. The bridge crew was tossed about again as the ship did this, and everyone was trying to grab a secure hold on something. The Arbiter finally found his and held on tight.

"Asteroids successfully evaded," said the NAV officer.

"Where the hell did they come from?" Nico asked as he pulled himself back up to the control panels.

"Hold on, scanningâ€¦detecting gravitational pull with no apparent

source. Excellency, I think that was from the Earth—or what remains," the Sangheili said. The Arbiter looked at the view screen and saw he was right.

Earth had been destroyed.

What could they do now? How many survivors were there?

"Excellency, I'm picking up another spatial anomaly. There is a point in space that has a volume many times of what it is supposed to be," the NAV officer said.

"A space-time anomaly magnifying the space of infinite, simultaneous time points—" Cortana whispered. The Arbiter thought of what she said. Then he got an idea. A wonderfully brilliant idea. An idea that could end up saving the Earth from its fate. It had to be done to save the planet.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: I know that technically, Nassau Station and so-called Spartan-458 aren't considered canon in the Halo universe, but the event that was created from this in Dead or Alive 4 was so good, I had to use it. R&R please.

13. Chapter 13

NH3: The next chapter! Let's see what happened. Sorry it took so long—

(SAQ comes up running, panting like crazy)

NH3: Where were you back at chapter one?

SAQ: Writing fanfics. R&R please!

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1630 hours, April 6, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), **_**Seeker of Truth**_**, heading toward Earth, in Slipspace.****

When the Arbiter told Nico his idea, Nico immediately wondered where he had gotten it.

"That—must be the—craziest idea in history. Thing is, it just might work," Nico said. "You want to enter the anomaly, head back in time to just a few minutes ago, and ship the NOVA bomb yourself?"

"Our ship is far faster than the human's ships. We can save Earth," the Arbiter cried.

"How would we get away?" Nico asked.

"We would jump to Slipspace," the Arbiter replied. Nico thought of his idea for a moment. There were so many unanswered questions, so what would happen? But Earth was destroyed, the anomaly was

collapsing slowly, and Nico had to make the decision now. He took a deep breath.

"Yes, Arbiter. I relinquish my command to you," Nico said.

"Thank you," the Arbiter said. "Bring engines to full speed. Head for the time anomaly."

"Calculating approximate timesâ€¦got it. You are free to go in five seconds," Cortana said. Nico understood why: to put them all in the right position in time, it had to be calculated exactly right. They couldn't afford a mistake, even in nanoseconds.

"5,4,3,2,1,0! Engines to full speed, now!" the Arbiter yelled. The crew members rushed to accomplish these tasks.

"Collision Imminent," said a warning sound. "Please evacuate now." The warning was squelched by Cortana, who said that was normal. Nico got shivers from what would happen if Cortana was wrong.

"Approaching anomaly," Nico announced to the Arbiter. He walked over to the NAV officers station and computed the mathematics in his head. "in twelve seconds."

"Excellency! Unknown contactâ€¦it's aâ€¦wall?" yelled the NAV officer into Nico's ear; Nico was quiet enough that the officer didn't know he was there. But he was right, for Nico saw on the screen a large contact heading toward them.

"That's no ordinary wall, that's a spatial wave!" Nico said. "Arbiter, blast through them!"

"Fire all turrets!" the Arbiter commanded. Several blazing trails of plasma launched forward, heading toward empty spaceâ€¦until they collided with the invisible wave heading toward them. A hole quickly burned through it and _Seeker of Truth_ sailed through it. It didn't really matter: five seconds later, they were being thrown around again as they entered the time anomaly. Seconds seemed to turn to minutes as the crew was thrown around the bridge, getting bruised and some cracks splitting the hellish room.

Suddenly, it stopped. Nico fell to the floor gracefully and landed, stumbling as the energy kept propelling him down; the gravity had cut out, damaged in the transfer. It took Nico time to register this in his head, until finally, he pushed gently toward the ceiling, where the Arbiter had hooked himself.

"Damage report!" he yelled, the force of the change in air currents bobbing his head slightly. A Sangheili crawled in midair along the railing to the engine station and carefully removed the dead officer that sat there now. The body floated up toward them, and Nico found something very curious about the environment. The bridge seemed expanded largely, hence the distance from floor to ceiling now.

"We are not reading any damage," the Sangheili said. This was even more peculiar. They should have sustained some damage. And what about the gravity?

"Cortana, can we have an explanation?" Nico asked.

"Since this isn't our time, we are in our own stable time bubble. This has expanded the space we are in greatly," Cortana responded calmly.

"Then why are we floating?" the Master Chief asked. Nico saw him gripped to a control station below.

"The gravity is still there, but it is related to the mass of objects, not artificially induced substances. It is still there, but there is no effect," Cortana said.

"Interesting. I have never been in such an environment," the Arbiter said to Nico. Nico nodded in agreement.

"No one has," Cortana said. "Chief, I need control of the ship. We are on a limited schedule." The Chief slotted it in a nearby station and put his hand through a holographic symbol.

"Got it! Hang on, the effect of movement will affect your space," Cortana said. The engines roared through the hull again and Nico fell toward the back wall with everyone else.

"Calculating countdown times," Cortana said. "Setting timers for twenty-three minutes until NOVA bomb detonation." A timer appeared on Nico's view: Sangheili used a retina system as their HUD.

"The prowler Point of No Return is seven minutes away. Everyone should suit up in the armory and gather in Airlock 55," Cortana announced, lighting up a path using trails on the floor.

"Tell the Forerunners to join us as well," the Arbiter said. He floated to the door that was now 'down' and entered it. The Master Chief and Nico followed him, along with two Sangheili. They reached the armory and grabbed only Carbines and Energy Swords. They continued along to the airlock, where the Forerunners waited, increasingly adapt in the zero-gravity situation.

"Reporting for duty, Excellency," Sufiyan shouted.

"At ease," Nico said as the Arbiter set the controls. The doors closed behind them and the doors in front opened. The first thing the noticed was the crew member running, apparently stopping due to shock. Nico peered in and saw that he wasn't petrified, but frozen in time.

"The time bubble has encased the ship and shut it into a non-passing state. They are moving and the bomb is ticking, but not in our bubble. The crew will register that the bomb just disappeared when we actually took it. Even though the bomb will have seemed to stop, it will explode in real time at the end of the timer," Cortana said on the com. Nico settled his feet on the floor, held by gravity, and ran to the cargo area, everyone following him. After a few minutes in their time, they found the bomb, along with several frozen technicians around it. Nico checked the timer: 12:14.

"We are losing time. Grab the bomb," the Arbiter said when Nico pointed it out. They carried it out to their side of the airlock and left it there; they would eject it at a safe location. They ran back to the bridge for the next part of the plan.

"Cortana, transfer to Slipspace!" the Arbiter yelled as they rushed in. Their timers were now at 2:51.

"Proceeding," Cortana said. The portal leading into Slipspace opened up and the ship pushed into it.

"Now, put us at a safe distance and eject the NOVA bomb," the Arbiter continued. Cortana didn't need to be told; they were leaving Slipspace already.

"Ejectingâ€¦uh, problem! Big problem!" Cortana said.

"What is it?" Nico asked.

"The airlock is not responding!" she yelled through the speakers.

"I'm sending technicians to fix the airlock!" Nico said, typing orders as fast as possible.

"We're not going to make it!" Cortana said. The timer was at 37 seconds. Time was being messed up in the very confines of their bubble, making seconds longer than what was thought to be!

"We have to try!" the Arbiter said. "Any word on the airlock?"

"None, sir." The com officer replied. The timer still skipped huge proportions, and finally it was in the last ten seconds. This evaporated in one huge chunk. Nothing happened. Nico realized something no one had considered.

"We are truly idiots," Nico said as he began to laugh.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: Sorry it took so long everyone. I had to figure out how this whole thing would work. Why didn't the bomb blow them all up as the time was being disrupted inside the bubble? Hint: read the part where they entered Point of No Return.

SAQ: You didn't need to figure out anything. You were just being lazy!

(NH3 holds up a roll of duct tape and a mallet)

SAQ: Ack!

14. Chapter 14

NH3: Saq left to keep writing fan fiction. R&R and see the RANDOM DISCLAIMER.

DISCLAIMER: I do NOT own Gutman's Ass, the Ninja Info Cards, Soulja Boy, Kanye West or Bob the Builder!

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1100 hours, April 7, 2553 (UNSC Military Time), Cairo Station, in orbit around Earth, ***Lord Terrence Hood's office.****

Lord Hood adjusted a few of the ribbons and medals on his shirt. He had to make himself look presentable for this ceremony. One more time, he consulted the computer on the mission reports and turned up the Elite Commander's first hand account. He scanned through it.

_It was right after the Arbiter had left that we picked up the distress call. It had already traveled for a few hours, but we were heading to Earth to pick up supplies and get our hands on NOVA bombs for our hard task ahead of us. (SEE ATTACHED FILES). The Arbiter came back and saw us rushing the ship's tasks. I told him what was happening and I gave him command. We exited Slipspace, but we were too late; the NOVA bombs aboard __the decloaked prowler detonated right in front of us, destroying Earth. We were all downcast until the Arbiter came up with the brilliant idea of entering the now-collapsed time anomaly and ferrying the bombs ourselves. We did so, suffering casualties from the extensive stress on the ship, and traveled. I feel that I was the first to see the prowler's occupants frozen in our time bubble. We learned and then moved to grab the bombs. We left them in the airlock and rushed back to the bridge, jumping into and exiting Slipspace. As the time anomaly we were traveling in collapsed, so did our personal passage of __time.__ When the countdown to explosion reached zero, nothing happened. I suddenly realized that the bomb was not in our bubble of time, and so it could not affect us, even though the bomb did explode in real time. Our ship reappeared a few minutes later and our mission ended with an escort to _Cairo Station

Everyone aboard the _Seeker of Truth_ would be accommodated. If it wasn't for that ship, the Earth would have been destroyed. And that wasn't the only reason. Most of the crew had helped find the Master Chief, destroy two installations, and confirm the galaxy's new enemy. The Elites had proved their trust.

Lord Hood prepared to travel down and thought about all the mission reports he sifted through. Nico had suffered the most debriefing, since his mission was unique in the path of the events. He had valuable intelligence on the Forerunners, and even on rebels, human, Elite, Brute, or otherwise. If Nico wanted, he had an open seat on ONI. The first time it was offered to an Elite. He never made any choice, only saying that his decision would be made after his journey was ended. Hood had to pull strings to keep the seat open.

Right behind Nico, Spartan 117 had suffered nearly as much also. He had been literally MIA for several months. But he came back. That officer had some luck in him.

The final one worth mentioning was the Arbiter, he had been in the middle of several conflicts and his viewpoint was as good as anyone else's.

The elevator opened and Hood stepped inside.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

1300 hours, April 7, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Cairo Station, in orbit around Earth, **Mess hall.**

Nico sat at a table alone, staring at the several medals he had been given. He had taken them off right after the ceremony. He didn't want them. He had become an officer to help people and serve a better cause. Earning these did not make him feel like he was helping others.

"May I join you?" said a voice behind him. Nico recognized it as Sufiyan's voice.

"Okay," Nico said, kicking a chair out. Sufiyan sat in it and pulled himself forward.

"Do you want a potato chip?" Sufiyan asked.

"No thanks. After a nasty run-in with something called 'pears', I tended to stay away. Turns out I was allergic," Nico responded. After Sufiyan took a bite and he saw him enjoying it, Nico took one and munched on it.

"Not bad," he said.

"I agree. Can I ask you something?" Sufiyan said.

"What?" Nico responded.

"Why are you just staring at those awards?" he asked.

"I came into the military at a very young age, younger than most. I just wanted to be helpful, and make something better. Being shipped to the front lines nearly trashed those hopes. I don't like these medals becauseâ€|one time, I had to kill another Sangheili to complete my mission, and I was awarded for it. It felt awful, so I don't care about these medals anymore," Nico said. "Where are your medals?"

"Ummâ€|" Sufiyan said as he lifted one side of his current coat; the medals were hung inside.

"Ah," Nico said. He picked at his medals while Sufiyan ate his food. He finally put them away and got up to leave.

"Wait, one more question," Sufiyan said.

"What is it?" Nico asked.

"The Master Chief said he was augmented to be strong and well-trained. You are so much faster and agile than anyone I've seen. Is there a story behind that?" Sufiyan asked. Nico stood there, wondering if he should give an answer. He made a decision.

"Come with me," Nico said, and they walked out of the mess hall. Nico lead them to a cargo bay connected to one of the airlocks on _Seeker of Truth_ and stood in a dark corner.

"I'm going to tell you something I've never told anyone but a commanding officer," Nico whispered. Sufiyan leaned in closer to hear.

"I entered the army at a very young age because I was a strong as those eligible to enter at the time. This was because I had a very rare disease that amplified certain traits. This explains my speed and my mind powers. This was, however, a disease, for I would eventually become too strong to control myself. I underwent many painful treatments and tests in an effort to remove this side effect. Finally, I could stand it no longer, so a short time after enlisting, I found that we were lied to and I became a heretic. Then, during the Covenant Civil War, I became an officer for Sanghelios and advanced quickly through the ranks. Now, from here, you can read reports, summariesâ€œ"

"Commander!" called a marine. Nico closed his eyes in stress and walked over, Sufiyan following.

"Yes?" he said.

"These are the NOVA bombs for your mission. I just need you to give clearance so they can be put aboard your ship," the marine responded. Nico did so, signing a few documents and letting them get stored. As the marine came out, Nico saw that he was nervous about something.

"Are you alright?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, um, uh, I have a request," the jittery marine said.

"Make it clear," Nico said.

"My name is David Jackson, gunnery sergeant, and on behalf of my legion, we would like to enlist with your crew," Jackson said. Nico chuckled.

"I'll bring it up with the Arbiter. I think he will be glad to have you," he declared.

"Thank you, sir," the marine responded, much more relaxed.

"We could use the extra hands," Sufiyan said.

"Just so you know, they also want to find out more about our lifestyle," Nico said.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: Well, there you go. R&R, enjoy, don't flame, and I'll be good to you for the holidays.

15. Chapter 15

NH3: R&R and see the RANDOM DISCLAIMER!

DISCLAIMER: I do not own the seasons, the Olympics, helicopters, Kelly Clarkson, Rihanna, or Dora the Explorer!

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****0900 hours, April 8, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), **_**Seeker of Truth**_**, in orbit around Earth, Sol System.****

Nico looked around at the bridge, which was beginning to look very odd with Sangheili, humans, and Forerunner Primates, as Cortana now called them. In addition, there was the Master Chief, an augmented human with MJOLNIR armor, standing aside, and the Arbiter and himself, both already seasoned veterans, commanders of the _Seeker of Truth._ Their journey had just been run more interference with the transmission the Arbiter was receiving.

"So, as you can see, you need to escort these scientists through the ruins, putting down any rebels in the way," Lord Hood finished over the transmission.

"We are on a mission to ensure the galaxy has a future. We don't have time for such missions," the Arbiter responded.

"That is why I'm sending the _Recon_ to fulfill this mission," Lord Hood said. His face seemed to tighten up against the Arbiter's response.

"They have more than enough crew on that corvette to deal with all of Earth's problems! Our crew should be solely dedicated to stopping the Halos!" the Arbiter yelled.

"No. The crew of the _Recon_ has far too little combat experience to handle Earthâ€"

"Considering what we have already seen, they would hardly survive this mission!" the Arbiter interrupted. Bad idea.

"Enough! This is the way it is. Any of you who defy this order will immediately be sent back to your home world for your immediate removal. Hood out." And just like that, the channel was cut off, leaving their orders hanging above them all.

"What are our orders, Arbiter?" Nico asked in a soft voice.

"Prep a drop ship and tell our shore party to suit up," the Arbiter said softly. Nico gave out the order and half the bridge crewâ€"the Master Chief, the Forerunner Primates, the marines, and a few Sangheiliâ€"filed out into the hallway. The Sangheili commanders followed them. The armory seemed dead quiet as they put on combat armor and grabbed personal weapons. Then they marched on to the hanger, the silence still encompassing them.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****0930 hours, April 8, 2553 (Temporary Forerunner Primate Time), Drop Ship GF-45, in atmosphere of Earth, Sol System.****

Sufiyan looked through the screens aboard the drop ship at the planet below them. He couldn't imagine such a war to cause fires blooming on the planet, glass covering half a continent and debris filling the orbit around Earth. The fact that the race who had brought this upon humanity was now their ally was proof that hope did come in dark hours.

Sufiyan braced himself as he saw a piece of starship armor fly at them. The pilot easily dodged it, but the ship shook from the sudden change. It wasn't designed to deal with such maneuvers. That was why they had Seraph fighters escorting them. They could blast the huge chunks and serve as protection from rebels, which were on the rise due to Earth's struggling condition. Almost by chance, they received a report on an active transponder that wasn't registered. A Seraph was sent to investigate and they continued into the upper atmosphere.

A few seconds later, calm became complete chaos in space. Several Seraphs were wiped off radar and communication as several rebel Longsword Fighters burst through the debris and fired their main guns.

"Look out!" Sufiyan began yelling, but there was no need; the fighter began jerking left and right, throwing everyone about. Outside, three fighters overshot them on a strafing run, and the drop ship dropped in the sudden heat change. The pilot struggled to maintain control of the chaotic ship. Bullets tore into the shields and armor and hit the pilot dead on. The accompanied drop put the ship into a chaotic corkscrew unchecked by a pilot.

From his position against the wall, Sufiyan reached desperately for the controls, mere inches from his hands. If he couldn't reach the controls, they were all going down in flames. Sufiyan fought against the inertia to stretch along those few inches. He reached success as he grabbed the controls and pulled himself up. Now he had to stabilize the ship. Entirely clueless, Sufiyan turned in the opposite direction of their spin. The stress on the ship overwhelmed it, stabilizing their descent, but tearing the doors off the starboard side. Several marines nearly fell out, but they were saved by Sangheili reaching to catch them. Another Sangheili came over and took control. A few minutes later, they landed.

The battle report was bad. "Out of the ten Seraph fighters who were going to land with us, only three made it, one so badly damaged it crash-landed. The spare drop ship with reinforcements has also disappeared, which takes our force down to half. Several troops were also wounded in the drop ship," Nico told the Arbiter. He went on to say that a marine had fallen out, and the pilot had been hit also and immediately died. Sufiyan finally took a look in their surroundings.

They had landed in a forest somewhere in a range called the "Adirondacks." The dig site was a few clicks away, over the mountain south of their position. The Arbiter had ordered all the wounded to stay at the LZ and had everyone else join him. The company, designated "Delta Team" consisted of 18 troops. There was the Arbiter, Master Chief, Nico, the six Forerunners, five marines, and four Sangheili. They started on their hike, fanning out and keeping quiet, looking out for stray rebels. Two hours later, they had reached the perimeter of the dig site.

It wasn't really much of a dig site, but more of a defensive grid. Every now and then, Sufiyan would see a few scientists cleaning artifacts, but everywhere else was a barricade. The many marines turned around and stared at the odd party, which looked like they had gone to hell, as they walked by to the command post, which was a tent

near the front line. They approached it and the Arbiter, Master Chief, and Nico went in. The others waited outside. Sufiyan looked around and saw a gaping ruin entrance beyond the front line. Lord Hood had said that they were to escort scientists, but he now saw what he meant by sending the Recon to stop the rings.

"I now finally see why Hood sent us here," said a voice behind him, who had strangely echoed his thoughts. Sufiyan turned and saw Michael walking toward him.

"Yeah, but it still doesn't seem right to send a ship with inexperienced troops to finish our hard job," Sufiyan replied.

"Pray that they make it home safely," Michael continued.

"I can't. I have no more prayers to give to anybody. Not since our planet was ravaged and we were left behind on the ring. We thought it was something precious, something that brought good fortune. It only brought pain," Sufiyan said. They heard a swish behind them and turned. The Arbiter had exited, and his face held nothing but worry.

"Team, we have to move out immediately. Those rebels have no idea what they have their hands on. They have Forerunner technology!"

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: Sorry this took so long. I'm having friends over, including Saq, and I'm still busy as hell without school. R&R!

16. Chapter 16

NH3: Next chapter! R&R and see the RANDOM DISCLAIMER!

RANDOM DISCLAIMER: I do not own Sean Kingston, Scrubs, Eddie Murphy, or Blue's Clues.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1150 hours, April 8, 2553 (***Adopted Sangheili Time***),
Adirondack Dig Site, Earth, Sol System.****

"What?!?!" Nico heard everyone say as he exited the tent.

"It's true. There is formidable evidence that there is Forerunner technology in that cave. The rebels may not know it," the Arbiter continued.

"We have to move in as fast as possible," Nico cut in. "Scouts say that the rebels have their own blockade set up. Also, it is nearly impossible to navigate the ruins on foot. The Forerunners may have had a system that bypassed this, but it is inactive right now."

"We all need grappling hooks, cables, whatever there is to climb," the Arbiter continued. "Everyone find something to eat as fast as possible. We will gather supplies." Everyone sprang up to do so, moving faster considering what was at stake. The Arbiter led Nico and

the Master Chief to a nearby tent. Inside was enough climbing equipment to supply a small legion. They grabbed enough for the team and the scientists they were escorting, plus a few extras.

Outside, they saw everyone eating rations and waiting for them. When they approached, a few soldiers offered food, which Nico and the Arbiter took but the Master Chief declined. They ate in silence and handed out the equipment. They were ready, but the scientists hadn't showed up. The Arbiter quickly went inside the tent to question the commanding officer. Scarcely a minute later, he came back outside.

"The commander says they are getting ready and that we should move into the dig ahead of everyone," the Arbiter said. Nico noted that the disappointment of Lord Hood's decision had melted away.

"Move out!" Nico yelled as he took point. He loaded his Carbine and his Beam Rifle as they ran beyond the front line and into the 15-foot-high cavern. Nico took cover behind a rock and sighted ahead with the Beam Rifle. No contacts. He moved ahead, checking the Beam Rifle every few minutes. After twenty minutes of this, Nico began to grow anxious. This disappeared as he walked upon the edge of a cliff and nearly fell over. He recovered and looked around

The cavern behind him was small, but the space ahead of him was huge! It was carved into a cylinder shape, the top above him, but the bottom obscured by fog. In the walls, Nico could see armaments set up, spotlights searching the cavern and soldiers patrolling. This cave was a death trap if they didn't travel it carefully. Nico ducked down as a spotlight came over his position.

"Arbiter," he whispered into his headset. The rest of the team was still behind.

"Yes?" the Arbiter's voice rung in his headset.

"We have a problem. Uploading feed now," Nico whispered back, setting up the link. A few seconds went by.

"Hold position and stay hidden. We're on our way," the Arbiter responded. Nico sighted around, to see if they had a way to get by. He watched one of the spotlights and its pattern across the cavern. It was following the same path over and over. Nico realized that they were programmed to do so. There was a way to get across!

Nico felt a hand on his shoulder. He didn't do anything; he knew it was the Arbiter's hand. Nico heard the faint rustle of him lying down beside him.

"What do we have?" he asked quietly. They could hear through the headsets.

"The enemy has caverns set up with armaments. Turrets, mostly, but a few missile pods. The spotlights have been programmed to follow a set search, probably covering most of the cavern. I think the cables won't be seen if hung, but a body definitely would," Nico responded.

"It's too risky. They can't see the cables but they can see the hooks," the Arbiter said. Nico sighed. Then he thought of something.

He took out a piece of hacking software and turned it on.

"Are you going to turn them off and reveal our presence?" the Arbiter hissed.

"No. I'm going to get it!" Nico whispered excitedly. On his pad were the paths of the searchlights. They had the entire cavern lighted at some point, but Nico hacked farther, programming the enemy computers to alter the paths slightly and still read the same paths. Now there were dark spots and a rhythmic pattern that could be followed by anyone on a cable.

"Good job," the Arbiter whispered, taking out a human Pistol. He equipped a silencer on it and then inserted a harpoon, designed to implant and then lodge itself in a wall. He tied a rope as tightly as possible to it, pointed at a dark spot shown on the pad, and fired. A slight pop was heard from the gun, and then the far wall as it lodged in the wall. Nico cut the rope and tied it to a large rock. Finally, the Arbiter clipped himself and slid down slowly, making sure that the searchlights didn't see him as they hit the rope. He finally disappeared into the darkness as he hit the wall.

"Master Chief," Nico whispered. "This is our fallback position. If anyone sees us, start sniping. Feed us video so we have a bird-eye view." The Chief nodded and hefted a Sniper Rifle. The team received feed the Master Chief saw. Nico waved more Sangheili forward as the Arbiter created more lines in the cavern. When the Arbiter said he had reached the bottom, the only ones left were the Master Chief, Nico, Sufiyan, and Chris. Chris slid down the line. Sufiyan then began to follow, but something bad happened.

The clip had jammed.

Sufiyan struggled in the middle of the air as a searchlight came closer to him. Nico hit the pad and tried sending the searchlight into a diagnostic mode, turning it off. Sufiyan had a few more seconds before the rebels reset the system and sighted him.

"Hurry, hurry, hurry!" Nico hissed through the headset.

"I'm trying!" Sufiyan responded.

"Delta Team, we have a jammed clip. Brace for enemy fire!" Nico whispered. The searchlight came back on, flooding Sufiyan in light. Yells erupted from the smaller caverns as rebels saw him. Nico saw the program he wrote quickly deleted as the turrets were manually handled. Nico's mind raced as Sufiyan's life was in peril. No other choice left to him, Nico grabbed the rope, jerked it off the rock, and jumped over the edge.

Nico swung to the other side of the cavern, with Sufiyan above him. He heard turrets fire where Sufiyan was a few seconds ago, and then the discharge and firing of Beam Rifles and Sniper Rifles. Nico and Sufiyan hit the wall. Sufiyan climbed on the line next to him and slid down. Nico was climbing up when a roar began to sound and a single word blared in his headset:

"Hornets!" Nico saw three taking off from a cavern in the distance. Two of them veered off to other targets while the third came straight at him. Nico suddenly realized that he was illuminated in light! The

Hornet hovered right by the wall and fired its machine gun at him. Nico climbed faster, dodging the bullets. The Hornet then fired missiles at him. Nico braced himself and jumped off.

"For what felt like an eternity, Nico flailed his limbs, looking for anything to hold on to. Suddenly, he grabbed something and held on tight. He hung by one hand and swung wildly, but then grabbed with his other hand and looked at what he had grabbed. He was hanging on the tail of a Hornet, already moving from its supposed kill. What a stroke of luck!

Nico moved along the body and grabbed the cockpit. When it didn't open from the force, he simply tore it off. The rebel screamed in his face and tried knocking him down, but Nico punched him in the face, ramming his nose into his brain and instantly killing the rebel. Nico pushed him over the edge and climbed in.

It was a tight fit, as Nico found out. He quickly maneuvered it to attack another Hornet and fired the missiles. Direct hit! The Hornet plummeted into the fog and the fog lit up bright orange as it crashed. Nico turned to face the other Hornet, but found that his acquired ship was smoking already. Nico ducked low to avoid stray bullets and pushed the throttle to full. The other Hornet filled his sight as it came closer. At the last second, Nico released a plasma grenade on the nose of his Hornet and jumped out. The Hornets collided and the plasma grenade ignited both of them, resulting in a huge explosion.

Nico reached for something else, but all the ropes had been knocked down and he was hundreds of feet from the walls. Nico fell into the fog. Suddenly, he felt leaves rustle around him and vines wrapping around him. A few feet from the ground, he had slowed down enough to make a safe landing. He got up and shook his head. He then heard a slight whistling, and looked up to see the Hornet's coming toward him. Nico ran and hid behind some rocks as the fiery ball exploded.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: Hope you enjoyed that chapter. On a side note, I will soon open a website of my own to call my own, so keep an eye out. When it is up and running, I will notify everyone. Happy New Year!

17. Chapter 17

NH3: This is the Next Chapter! R&R and see the RANDOM DISCLAIMER!

RANDOM DISCLAIMER: I do not own Iraq, The Onion, Fergie, or the Backyardigans.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1300 hours, April 8, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Dig Site of Forerunner Ruin, Earth, Sol System.****

Nico checked his headset again. There was still no reception, not even a buzz.

Nico had been walking for half-an-hour into the ruins. But the ruins seemed never ending, like they continued to the other side of the planet. It was possible, considering the advancements of the Forerunners. Communication had been eliminated by the walls, and the only way Nico knew where the rest of his team was right now, was by the FOF tags. The others were above his position. Nico had somehow ended up farther down. Or maybe not.

Nico took out the pad he had hacked into the rebel base with. The deletion of the program so suddenly had overloaded the small device. It was entirely useless now. Nico threw it at a wall behind him and continued walking. He heard one impact but that was it. Nico turned around, suspicious. The pad had stuck to the wall on its own and was now illuminated by his flashlight. Nothing was holding it in place. Nico noted that the hall he was walking down was cylinder-shaped and suddenly, he had the answer.

Nico put a foot up next to the pad. Nico felt a feeling that made him feel he was jumping. So he was right. Nico put up his other foot, on the other side of the pad. Nico was now standing sideways to his original position. A few more steps and he was upside-down. Gravity was warped in here.

"This is amazing," Nico said to himself. From his position, he continued walking down the hall, his view of the team now below him.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****United Nations Space Command ALPHA PRIORITY TRANSMISSION
04640Z-83****

****Encryption Code: **Black**

****Public Key: **None**

****From:** Commander John Robinson, Commanding Officer of
Recon/(UNSC Service Number 4532-6583-3378)**

****To: **Lord Terrence Hood, Commanding Officer of ODA-142 Cairo
Station / (Service Number CLASSIFIED)**

****Subject: **UNKNOWN CONTACTS**

****Classification: **Restricted (BGX Directive)**

/start file/

UNKNOWN CONTACTS DETECTED IN ORBIT AROUND HALO INSTALLATION 08. SCOUT PARTY SENT, BUT SIGNAL BLOCKED BY HIGH MAGNETIC FIELD OF NEARBY MOON. NO CONTACT SINCE THEN. WE WILL CONTINUE OUR MISSION TO DESTROY THE RING, BUT WILL THEN INVESTIGATE INTO PARTY'S DISAPPEARANCE.

**/end
file/**

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1315 hours, April 8, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Dig Site of
Forerunner Ruin, Earth, Sol System.****

The Arbiter continued forward, keeping an eye on Nico's position below their party. They had suffered four casualties, three humans and one Sangheili. The Arbiter had thought they had lost Nico also, until they picked up the FOF tag.

The Arbiter looked ahead to the opening that grew wider with every step. They had noticed it about fifteen minutes ago with their combined flashlights, and it was growing rapidly. The notion of perspective seemed off, since every step widened it substantially more than normal. Five minutes later, they reached the hole in the loose arc of the team and received quite a shock.

The entire cave was a huge network of tunnels. They lead upwards, downwards, in every direction possible. Light crawled up the walls as the team looked at the area. The Arbiter wondered how they would navigate this area.

"Hey!" cried out a voice. Nico seemed to have climbed out of a tube and was now standing on the edge, illuminating them in light. The Arbiter gave a sigh.

"We see you! Do you have rope?" the Arbiter called back.

"No, but we don't need it!" Nico responded. When the Arbiter gave a face of confusion, Nico started to climb up the walls on his feet only. The Arbiter realized the fact himself that gravity was warped.

"That is amazing!" the Arbiter said when Nico had rejoined them. Nico was about to say something else, but all of a sudden, they heard several loud roars echo within the tunnels. The entire team went silent as the sound disappeared.

"I don't think we're alone," the Master Chief said.

"Arbiter, there!" a Sangheili called out. They looked in the light beam and saw a furry tail slither out of sight.

"Chief!" a Marine cried out. They turned to another lighted tail scurrying out of sight.

"Stay on your toes!" Nico cried out. At that moment, several large wolves came out of the tunnels and began to attack. They moved too fast for any effective shots fired. The darkness hid them and in the next few seconds, the wild dogs were fighting hand-to-jaw with the team.

The Arbiter found himself wrestling a wolf trying to tear his head off. He kicked it away and fired out a few shots from his Carbine. He missed and the wolf came right back at him. But the Arbiter was ready for it this time. He activated his Energy Sword right into the body of the wolf, killing it instantly. The Arbiter looked around for more targets, but saw that his strategy had taken effect; Energy Swords and Combat Knives were being drawn and soon after, the beasts lay dead on the floor. The Arbiter saw Nico grab one by the tail and slam it against the floor. Finally, he spoke.

"Whoever's not dead yet, sound off," he said. A few laughed, others moaned in pain. More of the team reactivated the lights that ran out

of charge. The cave was lighted up more by flashlights, Energy Swords, and reflections off Combat Knives. They couldn't see, however, where the team's half of the area merged with the other side.

"Does anyone have a plan?" yelled a Marine, who jumped from a rock. His shock turned to screams as he found himself floating toward a large rock. He crashed and stuck in place. The Arbiter realized that gravity had been warped above the ground as well as the surfaces.

"We need to reactivate the main power to this Forerunner construct," Nico said. "We can't rush completely blind when wolves are in here."

"I'm using the sensors on the Chief's armor to scan the area. Give me a moment to finish processing this," Cortana said. Several tense seconds passed by. "Got it. The sphere we are in has a diameter of three miles. There is an anomaly right in the center. We should investigate this. It could be an artifact or just a trap."

"Master Chief, you're with me. Nico, have the team watch our backs," the Arbiter said.

"Yes, Arbiter," Nico responded. He grabbed a few more bodies of the wolves and used a plasma grenade to set it on fire. The bodies burst into flame and lit the cavern up a little more. It still could not light their way enough. The Arbiter and Master Chief would have to travel alone in the dark for some time.

"Chief, jump on three. Oneâ€|twoâ€|three!" the Arbiter yelled, pushing off hard. It propelled them very fast, but they had 1.5 miles to cover. It would still take the better part of half-an-hour. About ten minutes in, they heard gunfire in the radio, an explosion, and then Nico's voice crackled through the radio.

"Arbiter, we're under attack. The rebels followed us!" he yelled. Moments later, the video feed came in. There were dozens of rebels against their team. They couldn't do anything to help. The distance was already far too great, and in a matter of minutes, Cortana detected a wall of ions. They passed through, physics not granting any change in direction, and all contact was lost.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: This is quite a cliffhanger. Will Nico and Delta Team survive through this perilous battle? Will the Recon succeed in their mission? Is the anomaly a precious artifact or a trap? You'll have to wait. Sorry it took so long. I had writer's block here, plus I remembered the cavern wasn't lit, so I had to fix that. R&R!

18. Chapter 18

NH3: Martin's Day means I'm going on vacation to see cousins. You may not hear from me.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****United Nations Space Command ALPHA PRIORITY TRANSMISSION
04640Z-96****

****Encryption Code: **Black**

****Public Key: **None**

****From:** Commander John Robinson, Commanding Officer of
Recon/(UNSC Service Number 4532-6583-3378)**

****To: **Lord Terrence Hood, Commanding Officer of ODA-142 Cairo
Station / (Service Number CLASSIFIED)**

****Subject: **UNKNOWN CONTACTS**

****Classification: **Restricted (BGX Directive)**

/start file/

CONTACTS HAVE ATTACKED THE _RECON_! SHIP BOARDED, BUT NOT CLEAR AS TO
OUR FOE! NOVA BOMBS HAVE BEEN STOLEN AS WELL! SHIP IS UNDER HUGE
STRESS. MY GOD! IT'S THE

/end
file/

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1405 hours, April 8, 2553 (UNSC Official Time), Dig Site of
Forerunner Ruin, Earth, Sol System.****

The Master Chief was tempted to look down as they approached, but then stopped himself. He would spin out of control if he did so. The location of the anomaly was coming nearer to his only viewpoint, directly above him. The darkness still hid it, and his flashlight didn't shine far enough.

"I'm getting schematics. Be careful Chief, for the anomaly is shaped like a" The Master Chief stopped listening; the object was coming into view, and the Master Chief recognized the shape instantly. As they approached, a Forerunner mechanism slowed them down until they floated right in front of the object. The object turned on and a yellow eye winked on.

"Hello! I am 117649 Irony Originality. I am the Monitor of Installation 07," said an orb that floated in front of them.

"Installation 07?" the Arbiter asked the Master Chief. He looked at the Elite and noticed they weren't spinning. More advanced technology.

"This Monitor must be far away from its personal ring," Cortana said.

"Nonsense! You are currently in the launching facility for this installation. The launch was delayed when the other installations were activated to contain the Flood outbreak," said the Monitor.

"Launching facility?" the Master Chief asked.

"Why, of course! This particular satellite around the system's star had been used for years to propel the installations farther into the galaxy. A single installation fired from the Ark would only reach the outskirts of this galaxy. It is with the assistance of this satellite's moon that the constructs can reach their predetermined positions. You are currently in the Launch Room," said Ironi Originality. He began to float around them, almost amused.

"So there is a Halo on the Earth's moon?" the Arbiter asked.

"In bits and pieces, but the construct currently lies on the moon, ready to be launched and reassembled in it's predetermined location," 117649 responded.

"Its pure irony that we destroyed a ring and then repaired it without knowing it," the Arbiter said, referring to the NOVA event a few days ago.

"Shouldn't the ring have been launched after the activation event?" Cortana asked.

"Protocol dictates that in the event of firing, all Forerunner systems are to go into standby mode for at least 100,000 local years. Protocol also dictates that foreign artificial constructs should keep their activities to a minimum, in case classified information is revealed in an actual process," the orb said. The Master Chief had the feeling Cortana withdrew from her normal routine.

"But there was time for the systems to move the Halo, so why didn't you?" Cortana continued.

"It wasn't necessary. A miscalculation had made it seem that seven constructs were needed for activation when in reality, only six were needed, a mistake that could only be found out by an activation sequence. I kept it here in case a reserve was needed," said the Monitor

"But there was need for a reserve. The Ark built a new one," the Master Chief said.

"I was supposed to receive notification of this, but apparently, I received no word," 117649 responded. "However, even if I did receive word, I would send the ring with another Monitor, since I am the only one who can watch over these systems."

"So why have we never met Flood when humanity first landed on the moon?" Cortana asked.

"Protocol dictates that the Flood can only be delivered to an installation fully built and ready to fire," Ironi Originality stated.

"So that means the ring poses no threat to life," the Arbiter said. Through this mission, they had found out that one of the rings did not pose a threat.

"Yes, and if Forerunner AI Construct 343 Guilty Spark is correct in

his message, then feel free to destroy it," the yellow light said.

"Wait, what message?" Cortana asked.

"The Monitor of Installation 04 sent me a warning message, but I had no worry. The ring has no use to me, and I believe that destroying the constructs, the only known places with any Flood organisms, is an idea the Forerunners could not take advantage of. I have instead grown fond of this place, which could rarely be destroyed," Ironie Originality responded.

"We need to get back before the team is overrun" the Master Chief said, remembering the danger the team was in. The momentary silence that followed was broken by the Monitor.

"Please allow me to assist you. From this launching facility, I have access to a teleportation grid, plus I have data from the other Halo installations launched. I truly believe that you have come up with the solution of eradicating the Flood from the galaxy," said the orb.

"Cortana?" the Master Chief asked.

"He doesn't show any of the routines that show AI's are lying. He is probably telling the truth," Cortana remarked.

"Alright, you can come," the Master Chief said.

"Splendid! I will transport you to your launch point right away!" said 117649. At that moment, three Sentinels appeared from columns of light around him. Another moment later, the Master Chief felt the same dizzy feeling of teleportation engulf him.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1415 hours, April 8, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Dig Site of Forerunner Ruin, Earth, Sol System.****

The Arbiter swayed in place. That was only the second time in his life he was teleported, and the feeling still felt weird. He quickly recovered, though, and found a stray plasma bolt come at him. He dropped to the ground and it passed over him. The Arbiter got up and pulled out his Carbine.

"Do not worry! I saw your attacker!" said the Monitor. His Sentinels maneuvered into place and charged their weapons.

"Hold your fire! Aim for targets not in common uniform!" the Arbiter yelled.

"As you wish," the Monitor said. The Sentinels moved apart, hunting only rebels now. The area around them was filled with sniper streams, gunfire, plasma bolts and beam streams. Some Sangheili were engaged in combat with swords, either Combat Knives or Energy Swords. The Arbiter fired at a couple of rebels and moved deeper within Delta Team's combat. He made it to the 'command post' established. The Master Chief wasn't there, so the Arbiter assumed he was outside fighting. He went to the Sangheili medic, who was busy patching up

wounded Marines and Sangheili alike.

"Where is Nico? I have to take command," the Arbiter asked. The medic looked up with tired eyes.

"He is out there somewhere," the medic said. The Arbiter didn't stay to listen to more; he immediately ran out into battle again. He fired at several rebels, but still no Nico. Finally, he saw him, fighting close combat at the front line with a Knife. The Arbiter ran to help him, but was distracted by rebels trying to flank him. Through glimpses, the Arbiter could see that Nico's shields were down. The Arbiter has to break away from his fight. He threw a plasma grenade and ran toward Nico again. It stuck, but the rebel had run after him. The explosion threw the Arbiter off his feet and onto the ground. He looked up, only to see Nico fall from a shot in the leg.

"Nico!" the Arbiter yelled, lifting his gun; the rebel was about to stab him to death. The Arbiter fired several shots. Only one hit, but it was enough. The rebel fell to the ground with a brand new bullet in his head. The Arbiter scurried up and started pulling Nico toward the command post. Nico was firing his own Carbine, but abruptly stopped when two new bullets lodged themselves in Nico's chest. Nico dropped the gun and screamed. Two other Marines gave cover, and the Arbiter pulled Nico into the tent. The medic inside immediately rushed to Nico's side. Nico began to cough up blood.

"I don't have enough to patch him up! If we can't get him to the surface, then he is done for!" the medic said. Abruptly, all the firing stopped and another Sangheili rushed in.

"Commander Niâ€"Arbiter!" he said, after seeing Nico.

"What is it?" the Arbiter asked.

"That was the last of them," the Sangheili said. The Arbiter breathed a sigh of relief.

"Thankâ€|youâ€|What areâ€| the casualties?" Nico asked painfully. He didn't receive an answer; he coughed up more blue blood and slipped into unconsciousness.

"Monitor!" the Arbiter called out. The yellow lighted orb came into the tent.

"Yes?"

"Get us to the surface, now!" the Arbiter said.

"Certainly," he said. Yellow columns of light began encompassing them all.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: I love this chapter because it gives Earth another purpose in the great Forerunner plan. R&R, since I was terribly sick as I wrote some of this. Just for some fun, try figuring out how "Ironic Originality" is related to 7, a number used frequently in Bungie games.

19. Chapter 19

NH3: In case you couldn't figure it out, Ironic Originality's name follows the 7 motif, which means that if you follow the graph on some Halopedia page and finish the problem just right, you get 7. I'm not going into detail.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1800 hours, April 8, 2553 (****Adopted Sangheili Time****), Cairo Station, in orbit around Earth, Sol System.****

The Arbiter sat on the chair, waiting for word if Nico was up. He had been given this room when Delta Team had returned, but the only use he had for it was a place to wait.

They had returned to the surface instantly, but luck had been on their side: a Pelican had been delivering supplies after rescuing the wounded of the crash site. With their help, Nico now had a 75 chance to live through his wounds, compared to the meager 17 they would have had if they had to wait. The Monitor had come with them too, and the Arbiter had expressed his thanks, but then he engaged in conversation with Cortana and the Arbiter lost interest. Honestly, the Monitor would have once been sacred, but that was long gone with the Prophet of Truth.

The Arbiter got up, moved the chair to the nearby computer, and sat back down. He booted the computer and looked around the database to see if there was a medical record on Nico. Nothing. Then he remembered that this was a human database. The Arbiter shut the computer off and accessed his personal pad. The pad connected to the _Seeker of Truth_, which was docked to the station. Nico's records popped on screen and he scanned through them. He had never taken the chance to do so, so why not now?

His personal record popped up and the Arbiter saw that he was born on Sanghelios and had a mate and three offspring. He was in his late-twenties in human years and took college at age 15. A year later, he became an officer in the military. Odd, for you had to be at least 18 to join. He became a heretic at age twenty for finding out the lies of the prophets and after a year, disappeared from sight.

When the Covenant Civil War started, he reappeared in several battles. His military record was heavily classified for all operations and projects. Not even the Arbiter had such clearance to access this. There was a list for the names though, and the Arbiter began to suspect he had been working for the Sangheili in his disappearance, long before the Covenant Civil War.

There were a few names he recognized from rumors around them. There was OPERATION ENORMITY, a mission to test amplifying traits of soldiers. It was believed that there were two groups, the testers and the subjects. Nico would have been a subject, for he had got into the military at such a young age. Then there was PROJECT DIVERSITY, a program to spy on the activities of prophets and gather intelligence. Finally, there was PROJECT X, known to be so secret, the name itself was classified. Nothing was known about it, so what purpose did Nico have in it?

The Arbiter abandoned this subject for now and finally accessed the medical file. He took a seat on the bed as it came on. His entire nameâ€"Nicolas Tesla Douglas Hornyakâ€"was human based for unknown reasons. The Arbiter would have liked to find out why, but both his parents were dead and Nico probably didn't know the reason. All his traits were amazingly high, but there was an attached file to each one, classified beyond his reach. Finally, he found one next to his psychology figuresâ€"natural leader, not afraid to do the right thing, and slightly xenophobicâ€"which was accessible due to some fluke. The Arbiter received a shock as he read this:

"Subject Nicolas Hornyak shows all the traits of Terminator Syndrome. This disease is one that amplifies certain traits of the physical characteristics and the mental characteristics. However, one trait is always spared from this process: body functionality. As a subject grows, so will all of his traits. However, body functionality will decrease less and less, until the brain cannot control the body and the body acts of its own accord. Subjects are known to be amazing individuals, but they have a short lifespan. The oldest age any subject has reached is 54, but the average age is 33 years. It is possible that if you have a high IQ, then you can extend your lifespan, but there are cases that don't conclude to this theoryâ€" " The Arbiter stopped reading. Now he was extremely upset that Nico might not be around much longer. He was approaching the average age for organisms with the disease.

"Arbiter!" a Sangheili called through the com. The Arbiter pressed a button on the wall and began to respond.

"What is it?"

"Nico
isâ€"|"

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1815 hours, April 8, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Cairo Station, in orbit around Earth, Sol System.****

The Arbiter ran faster than he had ever run. The many soldiers in the hallway had to step aside a few seconds early or throw themselves out of the way to avoid the Sangheili. He knew it couldn't be true. It couldn't be. The Arbiter threw the door to the medical bay open so hard, it rattled off its hinges.

This has to be a trick. It just has to, the Arbiter thought. He turned into the second room on the left and found it to be true.

Nico Hornyak had breathed his last breath mere minutes ago.

The Arbiter held back his tears. It felt dishonorable to Nico if he cried. Not once had he seen Nico cry. Not once did ANYONE see him cry. The Arbiter couldn't cry for him. He walked over to the nearby chair and sat down. He grabbed the still hand belonging to Nico. It was already cold, and no trace of a pulse remained. The reality overwhelmed him; he began to cry.

The doctor walked in, ready to give the details on the tragedy. He

put a hand on the Arbiter's shoulder and began to mutter words the Arbiter could not hear. The pat on his shoulder signified the doctors had finished and walked away. The Arbiter dried his last tears and began to walk out and leave Nico behind forever. Suddenly, Ironic Originality flew in and started performing scans. The Arbiter began to question this in his mind. When the orb started to pick up Nico by an energy beam, humming all the way, the Arbiter had to put an end to its actions.

"Stop it!" the Arbiter yelled, pulling him away.

"But I insist. Your friend deserves a right to live, and I might be able to give him that," the Monitor said.

"Explain," the Arbiter demanded.

"On the construct 'Earth', there was a system being developed that could replenish dead bodies and supply spare body parts. It relies on microbial robots to do this," Ironic Originality said.

"Are you saying that there is a way to bring him back?" the Arbiter questioned. This meant a lot to him.

"Technically, the system has never been truly tested, even though simulations are successful. It can't hurt to try, for your friend has already been terminated," the orb responded.

"Do it," the Arbiter said.

"Of course! I shall deliver him to the facility immediately, although it will take at least a week to complete the process!" the Monitor said, disappearing in columns of light along with Nico's still body. The Arbiter stood for a few minutes, and then his COM activated.

"Arbiter, please report to Lord Hood," an officer said.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1845 hours, April 8, 2553 (UNSC Official Time), Cairo Station, in orbit around Earth, Sol System.****

The Master Chief had heard about Nico's death, but he had no feelings to pay. Men had died under him and so had his superiors. The Master Chief entered the room and found the Arbiter, Sufiyan and Lord Hood there, with Cortana on a nearby pedestal.

"Everybody, I have some more grave news. I know that almost each of you are dealing with Nico's death right now, but the fate of the galaxy is more important. We recently lost contact with the Recon, and we need you to retrieve stolen NOVA bombs, scout the area, and destroy that ring,"

"With all due respect, sir, if you had sent us to destroy the Halo instead, there would be fewer casualties," Cortana said.

"It wasn't in my hands. The higher-ups made the decision," Hood said.

"Then they killed Nico!" The Arbiter yelled, standing up and knocking his chair over.

"We don't have time to reflect on this. You need to go destroy that Halo. Dismissed," Hood finished. The Master Chief left, somehow feeling very empty.

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

20. Chapter 20

NH3: Sorry I left you all with that cliffhanger and not reflecting on it. I was very tired. Anyway, Nico is NOT DEAD! His death plays a vital role in the story.

****HALO****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1100 hours, April 11, 2553 (****Adopted Sangheili Time**_**Seeker of Truth**_**, heading to Installation 01, in Slipspace.****

It was taking three days to reach this ring, and the day was here. The Arbiter sat in his command chair, ready to wait out the half-hour they had until they reentered normal space. He looked over to the chair for the second-in-command. It was still empty. The Arbiter still hadn't appointed a new commander. He still had hope Nico would be alive.

"Excellency, I'm reading a spatial anomaly. You should see this," the NAV officer said.

"What is it?" the Arbiter said, walking over.

"Scanners just picked it up. We will approach it in two minutes," the officer responded.

"Is it in normal space?" the Arbiter asked.

"No, it's in Slipspace. Impact is in one minute, thirty seconds," the Sangheili said.

"Give me a size reading immediately! Begin evasive maneuvers!" the Arbiter yelled. Sangheili began to furiously type in orders to the ship. The ship began to turn upwards relative to the unknown object.

"Excellency, the object is around two AU's wide!" the NAV yelled out. The view screen color began to turn from black to streaks of white and blue.

"Arbiter, it is possible to stop in this area. This is a Forerunner-generated piece of Slipspace," Cortana reported through the speakers. Her holographic form appeared on the pedestal nearby.

"Take us to half speed, put us in orbit," the Arbiter stated. As the orders were carried out, the unknown object began to come into view.

The object was most certainly Forerunner in design. Green lights all over the surface made the symbols of the Forerunners shine out toward them. It was in the shape of a sphere, and the Arbiter would have thought it a planet if the surface facing them wasn't Forerunner made. It was also much, much larger.

"A Micro-Dyson sphere," Cortana said.

"A what?" the Arbiter asked.

"A Micro-Dyson sphere is a theoretical design of a huge sphere surrounding a small star. This sphere would be the size of the orbit of an average planet. The Forerunners had such advanced technology that they were actually able to build one," Cortana said. "Or, they might have been able to alter Slipspace enough to make this object out of few materials."

"There are so many mysteries around these Forerunners we can't be sure," Sufiyan said after he walked in. He, like every other passenger, felt the odd deceleration.

"True. We should send a scouting party. See what we can find. We'll tag this area for future study and continue with our mission," the Arbiter responded.

"Excellency, they may not need to," the NAV officer said. The Arbiter reminded himself to keep his calm; Nico was allowed to call him the Arbiter, not Excellency. He looked at the object and saw a small hole opening up. They were miles above the construct, so it was hard to determine how large it was, but the Arbiter had a feeling that the Seeker of Truth could fit through that. As if to drive the point home, the ship jerked and the hole grew wider.

"Why are we piloting in?" the Arbiter asked.

"It's not in our control. We're being pulled in by tractor beams," the engineer officer said. It was true; they could only sit back and wait for the hole to engulf them.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****TIME ANOMOLY.*** ESTIMATED 1130 APRIL 12, 2553 (UNSC Official Time), in center of Onyx, in Slipspace.****

Fred ran toward the Forerunner structure that was winding into effect far ahead of them. It was their best bet out. Kelly sped passed him, but then stopped not too far ahead. Fred stopped too, so that they could wait for Dr. Halsey, CPO Mendez, and the other Spartans of Blue Team. That wasn't why Kelly had stopped, though.

"Look!" she yelled, pointing. Blue Team caught up to them at this point and Fred turned around. He breathed sharply. In front of him, a Covenant cruiser was poking through the massive hole. It seemed like a tower that was steadily growing.

"We still didn't escape war," Dr. Halsey breathed. Fred agreed silently. They stood on a hillside, overlooking the growth of the ship. The wind notably picked up as warmth from the engines entered

the calm atmosphere. Fred knew they were outmatched. This ship was nothing like Ascendant Justice. This ship bristled with power in might. They could do nothing but wait.

Fred looked over at Kelly. Her helmet swiveled toward him. They apparently needed the same thing: guidance. Kelly looked away and pulled out an ammo clip, sliding it home. Fred followed her example. If they were going to die, then they would die fighting.

Fred saw the first Phantoms fly out of the hangers. They had rockets, but they should save them for the main force. He grabbed a rocket launcher from the hands of someone else. Names were forgotten for mob mentality. They all had one purpose: To take as many Covenant bastards as possible to hell with them.

"Hold on," Dr. Halsey said. She put on headphones that were connected to her laptop. A few moments later, she took them off.

"Lower your weapons!" she cried out. The Spartans did so. A Phantom hovered extremely close to them and hovered above the ground, right in front of them. Fred stood still, but felt extremely tense. He was never told to avoid shooting Covenant in this way. The hatch in the side opened and three figures fell out. One was an Elite. The others were humans. And one of them had the special MJOLNIR armor of the Spartans.

"Master Chief, sir!" Fred yelled out. The entire party saluted, including CPO Mendez. The only one that didn't salute was Dr. Halsey, who was gathering up her things.

"Good to see you, John," she said. John made the traditional Spartan smile gesture to his teammates and the new Spartans. His class of soldiers responded the same way, the other Spartans responding soon after.

"Come on. We should return to the starship. Our work is done!" the Arbiter yelled. He led all of them into the ship as the wind grew stronger.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1145 hours, April 11, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), **_**Seeker of Truth**_**, heading to Installation 01, in Slipspace.****

The Arbiter couldn't really believe the discovery they had just made. There were more Spartans alive, a fact he never questioned because he thought they were dead. And there was a new generation also! They were back on route to the ring and up a few crew members now.

"I still don't think they can compare with Nico. He was the best Sangheili I knew," the Arbiter said to himself. He went over to the computer and found a message to him. The sender's name consisted of a bunch of numerals. He realized after opening it that it was from Irony Originality.

"Reconstruction proceeding faster than anticipated. Reawakening in five more days," he read. He leaned back in his chair, smiling.

With a little luck, Nico would be back soon.

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: Sorry this may have been shorter than usual. There wasn't really much I could do for rediscovering the Spartans. If anyone is interested, then when I finish plans for an actual fiction, I'll give a link to my new Fiction Press page. I don't think I can use my usual penname because a Spanish dude took it. Kind of ironic, since I'm half Spanish.

21. Chapter 21

NH3: I have to kill about five days in this story to bring Nico back. It will be soon!

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1300 hours, April 11, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), *_**Seeker of Truth**_**, heading to Installation 01, in Slipspace.****

"Excellency, we are almost upon the ring. Only a minute more," the NAV officer said. The Arbiter repeated the response he had been saying for a while now.

"Could you please stop calling me that? 'Arbiter' is just fine," the Arbiter said. The NAV officer seemed to understand that he was bothering the Arbiter, so he pressed a few buttons and let the timer wink on and count down on the view screen. The Arbiter mentally braced himself. This was unknown territory. Anything could be greeting them at the ring. The timer slowly winked down, as if to make him more anxious. Finally, it read 0:00, and they entered normal space.

"We have arrived. Sensors are picking up debris in the area," Sufiyan said. The Arbiter questioned himself on the meaning of the name.

"Begin scanning the wreckage. Also, keep an eye out for other things. I want my sights on the view screen," the Arbiter commanded. The officers went to work in collaboration, and a few seconds of patience showed the area around them. The ring lay in between two planets orbiting each other. The system was a binary system, so there were two stars, always making room for one to shine on the ring. The debris field extended to the planets, which had wreckage on their lifeless surfaces. The Arbiter saw a ship, UNSC by the looks of it, hovering over the inside of the ring.

"Is that ship Flood-infected?" the Arbiter asked.

"Yes, but the Slipspace drives overloaded themselves. It's stuck here," the NAV officer said.

"No chances. Burn it," the Arbiter ordered. The Arbiter saw the view grow and disappear at the edges. Outside the hull, the _Seeker of Truth_ descended on the ship.

"In range," the weapons officer said.

"Fire!" the Arbiter yelled. On the view screen, a trail of plasma snaked toward the ship and collided with the other ship. The ship boiled away until only more debris remained.

"That was far too easy. Do we have a distress signal?" the Arbiter asked.

"None so far. Wait, picking up something," the com officer responded.

"What is it?" the Arbiter said.

"I'm not sure. I need to analyze it in this state. We are only barely within range to pick it up," the com officer said.

"Arbiter, I have something else. Right under where the ship was. A fierce battle is taking place between Flood and humans," the NAV officers said.

"Survivors. That signal must be from a distress beacon," the Arbiter said. "We're going down there. Saddle up the majority of our troops. The Spartans, Spec-Op Sangheili, Forerunner Primates, and I will take the first three Phantoms out. We'll scout it out, locate survivors. If it gets hot, we will call in support."

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1330 hours, April 11, 2553 (UNSC Official Time), Phantom A-1658, Installation 01, unknown space.****

The Master Chief was immensely glad that there were other Spartans around him now. This would be their first mission together in a long time. But there were new faces he had to get used to. There was Ash, Olivia, Mark, Tom and Lucy working with the Spartan-II's, Fred, Kelly, and Linda. There were others too, but Team Katana was stuck in the cryo pods, encased by a Slipspace bubble. Others weren't even with them, fighting somewhere else.

"LZ is hot! We hit ground in two minutes!" the pilot called out. John had a check on their weapons initiated. Everybody carried an assault rifle and a shotgun. Even Linda did, abandoning her usual sniper equipment. Those things were useless on Flood. The Master Chief had found out rather harshly on the first Halo.

"Alright, opening the hatches," the pilot yelled. The hatches began to open as the Spartan-III's disappeared in their SPI armor. Chaos erupted, but order wasn't lost yet; they were dropped in the middle of it all. The team took cover in a rock enclosure in between the fighting sides. They weren't in hand-to-hand yet, but each front line was pretty close to the other, and Flood forms kept launching themselves high in hunger, only to be shot down again. The Master Chief signaled to the Spartan-III's to collapse a part of the enemy's front lines so they could run; hands up and squish, then scurrying fingers. The semi-invisible soldiers moved off. The Master Chief had at least one advantage with them. Several shots rang out and ten Flood forms fell dead. The Spartan team ran toward the humans and ducked behind their barricades.

"Holy shit, you guys are Spartans," a private said. He quickly

returned to fighting a few infection forms.

"Where's the officer in charge?" the Master Chief asked.

"He's at the Control Room a few clicks back! Grab some Warthogs! We'll hail down a Pelican after this is over!" he yelled over the gunfire. The Master Chief noticed several Warthogs quite a ways behind them.

"Blue Team, grab three Warthogs," the Master Chief ordered. He himself climbed into a driver's seat as Fred and Ash took the other open spots. In the other Warthogs, Kelly, Linda, and Olivia took one and Tome, Lucy, and Mark took another. The Master Chief drove and examined his environment. It seemed to be tropical, but he could see water and beaches near their LZ. A few minutes later, he was driving through a friendly camp at the base of the Control Room. Most of the soldiers stared at their occupants, shocked expressions on their faces. John was more interested in the structure, however.

The structure was an archaic cone with a flat top. A single ramp, beginning extremely wide and ending very narrow, spiraled around the structure. He had never seen such a design. John drove the Warthog up as far as he could, with everyone behind him, before it became too narrow. Blue Team came up on foot. They entered the structure and went through several doors before arriving at the panel. A commander stood nearby, looking at battle reports. There were also several soldiers there. They all looked up quickly, their faces anxious for action. This expression turned into shock while the commander looked them over.

"Commander John Robinson?" the Master Chief asked.

"That would be me," he said, smiling weakly. "Nice to see they sent Spartans."

"Yes, but we have to blow this ring before it's activated, one way or another," the Master Chief said. His com suddenly beeped and he opened the incoming channel.

"This is Master Chief, Spartan-117. What is it?"

"Spartan, our other Phantoms have either crashed or been shot down. We are not sure yet. We need support as soon as possible. Lock on to my signal and pick us up ASAP," the Arbiter whispered. The channel closed, leaving the Master Chief stranded in his thoughts. He knew what to do.

"Do you have the NOVA bombs?" he asked. The officer pointed to a large bag nearby.

"Good. We have to put two down to blow this place up after we get them out. We should place one here and another one the other side of the ring," the Master Chief said.

"That's where the Library is. That would be in the hands of the Flood," Robinson said.

"Then we should get to work."

****HALO***HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: All hail the day when I am totally free! I might be free tomorrow as well! R&R please!

22. Chapter 22

NH3: I'm so sorry it took forever! I'm organizing a band and it's taking a month to do everything else. I also had to think about how the plot would proceed. This basically means that I have a sequel in mind. Well, R&R please.

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1500 hours, April 11, 2553 (UNSC Official Time), Pelican R-648, Installation 01, unknown space.****

The only reason the survivors had held on so long was because they had been well supplied. The Master Chief and the Spartans had been escorted to an armory, which was huge because they held four Scorpion Tanks and ten Warthogs, all in perfect condition. The weapon supply was impressive as well; the weapons even included enough Spartan lasers for the entire team. A Pelican had picked them up soon after and flew them toward the NAV point. They were now only a mile away.

"Spartans, check your weapons. When we aren't being sneaky, it's going to get hot," Fred yelled. Everybody was equipped with an assault rifle and a shotgun, then overburdened with Energy Swords and either Spartan Lasers or Beam Rifles. Beam Rifles had a melting effect on the Flood. While not the best stealth weapons, it was a good way to dispatch the Flood.

John looked out the back hatch at the surrounding mountains. He knew that they could be filled with Flood. The Chief felt the ship decelerate and he braced himself. A few Flood forms appeared which soon fell to Linda's Beam Rifle. They landed, got off and moved toward the NAV point further along the path, which curved three-quarters of the way around the mountain. The Pelican lifted off to hide behind a mountain. No other sounds could be heard. It was dead quiet. Fifteen minutes later in there stealthy path, Olivia noticed a sound. The all listened carefully.

The sound was a sign of battle. There was a fight going on not too far away. As if to drive the point home, two Banshees curved around the mountain and passed above them. It was so sudden and so quiet that the Master Chief had a hard time believing the Linda had sniped one a few seconds later. The other Banshee turned to investigate, but it could not see them. It turned and began to fly away before Linda shot that one down as well.

The team quietly moved forward and to the Banshees. They were in good condition to fly, so the Master Chief quickly appointed Fred and Ash to fly them. As a common group, they abandoned stealth due to the Banshees keeping pace overhead. They still maintained radio silence, but there actions spoke the words they all had in mind: _Let's go kick their asses._

It was some time before a red light appeared on Olivia's status. She had scout on ahead to check it out. Something was wrong, for her vitals showed an increase in heart rate.

"Cut the Banshees! Go, now!" the Master Chief yelled. The Banshees dropped sharply, but it made them death traps. Several groups of Combat Forms jumped off the side of the mountain. Three landed on the Banshees, and while several others were sniped down, John suddenly found himself in his personal confusion. Orders couldn't help him now; he had to fight on his own.

Several bullet holes appeared in a nearby Flood Form, from the Chief's own gun. The thing lost a leg, and the Master Chief abandoned it for now. He beat down several others and found his shotgun useful. Minutes later, he ran, free from the death trap, toward Linda, who had been sniping for some time.

"Call for that Pelican! Tell them we need cover fire!" John ordered, brandishing his Beam Rifle. Linda slung hers and retreated to safety. John put out several rounds, watching the Combat Forms simultaneously move fast and slow. After either an eternity or a few seconds, Linda returned.

"There's a jammer somewhere. We're cut off," she said, resuming her excellent sniping.

"They will notice it and come searching. We need to signal them," the Master Chief responded. The Spartans were nowhere near dead yet, but chance got people killed.

"Flare gun," Linda replied. "It's with Mark, but I can't see him." The Master Chief started looking around, but he had no luck either. Then he was thrown off guard; a Combat Form had snuck up behind him. The Master Chief brandished his shotgun and fired from the hip. The center blew up in several places, but not enough to kill. Not another shot came from him: two sniper trails blew up the head and the legs. The Chief turned as the thing died and saw Mark in a tree.

"Fire the flare!" the Master Chief shouted. Mark rummaged through the pack and held up a large gun. Trigger pulled, a large red flare arced over their battle. It landed and extinguished itself somewhere in the tree tops, but John could already hear a Pelican roar. Machine guns scathed the treetops and rained down on the Flood. The Spartans quickly retreated away and the Pelican finished them all off. The team gathered with John on his hill.

"It's too dangerous on foot. We have to take the Pelican," that wasn't really true: the Spartans could have had time to dispatch the Flood, but time was likely running out. The team understood and they ran to the hovering Pelican. They piled on and the Master Chief ordered Fred to the machine gun. At a much faster speed, they suddenly found themselves strafing the battle they heard. A large explosion also saw their drop ship become a device of hell; they had been hit!

"Brace yourselves!" the pilot yelled to the Spartans. Then the cockpit became engulfed by fire and a large chunk of fire blew off, screaming all the way. With no way to control the Pelican, the Master Chief crouched for the inevitable crash landing. The ship shook and dirt kicked up behind

them, forming a large dust cloud. The Master Chief quickly ordered everyone out, using the dust as cover.

As the Flood were searching the wreckage, Olivia managed to catch sight of some Elites. She told John, who ran over, with the team behind him. The Elites drew weapons, but then realized who they were.

"Master Chief! The Arbiter is back there somewhere," one said. The Master Chief left some of his team at the front line and took Fred, Ash, Mark, and Linda with him. He soon found the Arbiter at a makeshift command post, which was in the wreckage of their drop ship.

"Master Chief! We've lost our escape, but we are able to hold out against them now," he said. "There is a sniper point up at that hill. Send your snipers up there." The Chief dispatched Mark and Linda to do so. There didn't seem to be much need right now, but a few minutes later while discussing escape, the rest of the team came up behind him.

"Chief, we have Cyber Forms!" Kelly said.

"They're here too? Regret must have already been here," the Arbiter said.

"But why didn't he activate this ring?" the Master Chief asked. The Arbiter didn't know why either. Their conversation was cut short as Cyber Forms lunged out of surrounding bushes and trees.

"Open fire!" the Master Chief yelled. The team did so. But Cyber Forms were tough, and the waves were endless. The Master Chief found himself struggling to win this battle. It was either win or die. Surrender was never an option, and he didn't have that option anyway. The Master Chief saw several Spartans fall, dead or unconscious, and he swore to make every shot count. Suddenly, he felt the effect of his armor being nearly drained of all power and he fell down from the hidden weight. He saw no more after that.

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1600 hours, April 11, 2553 (Adapted Personal Time), Installation Launching Facility, Earth, Sol System.****

Ironic Originality worked in silence. But inside, he was running far more calculations than he should have been doing. He noticed this and wired himself to other processors. Finally, he reached what he was looking for and made even more calculations.

"Oh my! This specimen will be ready in two days now! How odd!" Ironic Originality said, looking into the stasis bed.

Inside was the gradual repair of Commander Nico Hornyak. He hadn't died yet, but he was close enough. This would be his second chance.

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: At long last, this chapter is finally completed! Now that I know where I'm going, you won't need to waste another month everyone. I'll update soon, it's the least I can do.

23. Chapter 23

NH3: I told you that you wouldn't have to wait. R&R please.

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1000 hours, April 13, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Flood Held Library, Installation 02, unknown location.****

The Arbiter had been drugged for two days, and could only capture the glimpses of their movement. The Arbiter struggled to remember what happened as he tried to open his drugged eyes.

They had been taken somewhere, far away from the battlefield, and the ring. He remembered getting knocked out by somethingâ€”a Cyber Formâ€”and remembered a fierce battle, in space, between the _Seeker of Truth_ and a Flood Controlled Ship. He remembered being forced to watch as it crashed on the ringâ€”did he cry for that?â€”he couldn't remember.

Now they were on another ring, one with a Flood armada of ships, dedicated to personally guard Regret. The Arbiter finally opened his eyes.

He was in a prison cell. He had been placed on a bed, but by his cellmates, for he felt his bruises from being thrown around. He lifted himself by his elbows and hit his head against the bunk above him. He threw his head back onto the bed and rubbed it to quell the pain.

"Sir?" a human voice said. The Arbiter opened his eyes again and looked to the side. A human knelt down beside his bed with a curious eye, for any further injuries.

"You will have to watch the bed. The conditions are rather bad. Regret decided to give us crap," he said. The Arbiter looked around and saw how true it was; the cell was the size of a large walk-in closet with bunk beds crammed into the sides. A pit lay near the back for waste, but there wasn't a lot, since they weren't receiving much food either.

He looked around more. Sitting on a bunk was Sufiyan, and beneath him was the Master Chief, unmoving in his armor. It made sense to drug him, since the Master Chief would have destroyed the place, but it was amazing that he could stay on the bed without collapsing it.

"â€|Gunnery Sergeantâ€|David Jackson, what's the status?" the Arbiter asked once he looked at the nametag.

"We are on another Halo ring, the second I believe. There is an armada in place above our heads, probably to protect Regret. The _Seeker of Truth_ was shot down, and most of the survivors, along with most of the _Recon_ crew, are held captive in this building,

which is the Library. They managed to place the NOVA bombs, but we couldn't detonate them from Slipspace and there was a jammer in place when we arrived," Jackson finished.

"Nothing good I see," the Arbiter replied.

"What should we do?" Sufiyan asked.

"The only thing we can:
wait."

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1200 hours, April 13, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Installation Launching Facility, Earth, Sol System.****

The stasis bed opened up, and Nico found himself staring into the eye of 117649 Ironik Originality.

"Please climb out and avoid any vigorous movement until you get a good feel for your body," he said. Nico climbed out and immediately fell. He felt dizzy and noticed he was naked. Come to think of it, what had happened?

"Where am I?" Nico asked.

"Why, you are in one of the medical facilities for the launching facility," the orb responded. Nico remembered the battle—he had been hit! Nico looked at his bare chest for the scars, but there were none. The only proof of any wounds was clean patches of skin over the Mark of Shame he had.

"Can you explain why I'm here?" Nico asked.

"You are here for regenerative treatment for your fatal wounds. With time, I was able to bring you back to a stable status," 117649 said. Nico had died? He thought it odd, but at the same time, he was accepting of this. Forerunner technology was extremely advanced, and thus priceless. Who said they couldn't bring a human or Sangheili back to life?

Where are the others?" Nico asked. He had died and seen the truth behind the Flood's intentions. He was now hoping they were safe.

"Their last log put them as heading to Installation 01." Nico threw a tray with tools against a wall, not even leaving a dent in the super hard metal. They were in more danger now, and Earth was better safe if protected. Both rings were out of the range of Earth, but Regret was going to try activation anyway. If he did, the Flood could do anything. And the Flood would first satisfy their hunger—|

"You have to get me there, as fast as possible. You need to teleport me!" Nico yelled.

"Of course! I have to charge the device though—"

"Fine! I just need armor and weapons," Nico interrupted.

"Yes, I have taken the liberty of upgrading your armor with

Forerunner devices, so that it is easier to dispatch the Flood," the orb said, facing a wall and using his energy beam to hit a pad. The wall opened to show a space that held Nico's armor, which had Forerunner metal designs covering vital points and giving a neat, ceremonial look to it. "It is actually rather basic still. It can take a direct hit from a plasma-condensed melee device, but repeated hits will cause it to fail. It is the same with plasma projectiles, but bullets will have to hit between the Forerunner metals."

Nico put this new armor on. It seemed heavy at first, but then he started moving and found that it didn't interfere with movement or anything. Nico could still move just as quickly as he did. He soon stopped testing the armor to grab his weapons. He took his Carbine and Beam Rifle, which now had more conservative ammo and charge systems. He then reached for his Energy Swordâ€¦

"I think you won't need that. Come, I have something to show you as the device powers up," 117649 floated out of the room. Nico grabbed the Energy Sword anyway. It was a family relic, so he couldn't leave it.

Nico followed the orb out of the room and walked for a long time before turning into a roomâ€”an amazing Forerunner armory.

"To help you dispatch the Flood, I will permit you to carry one of these weapons. Be careful with the one you chose, for they are rare, sacred to me, and I will not give you another," the orb said. Nico walked around, trying to make his choice count. Inside, he was also beaming with delight. This was the most extensive Forerunner discovery he had ever seen! Besides the rings, of course.

"This one," Nico stated. It was a double-bladed staff, with rough Energy Sword shaped blades at the ends. Sangheili were trained to use a pole to fight from a very young age. Nico excelled in this.

"Ah, a good choice! It is perfect for rapid termination of the Flood," 117649 Ironic Originality said. Nico lifted it and swung it around. The staff was amazingly light, and it suited him perfectly. He examined it again and noticed the Forerunner words.

"Can you provide a translation for this?"

"Of course. This is a rather old poem, though it doesn't really rhyme. It says:

"_We do not hold power,_"

Nor weakness,"

No leader can guide us better,"

Then the one called the Maven.""

"Maven?" Nico asked.

"A term for a great leader of the Forerunners, it is a sacred honor. This weapon has belonged to one. It is called the Staff of Mavens due to this."

"I'll take it. I'll need all I've got."

"Then the device is ready!"

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1230 hours, April 13, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), **_**Seeker of Truth**_** Crash Site Installation 01, unknown location.****

Nico had decided to take 117649 with him. Thankfully, he was self-absorbed and usually quiet. But Nico was shocked at what happened. A battle had taken place over the ring, and the new ship was completely devastated. There were Sangheili and humans, but not a lot left. Most had died from extensive injuries. Others had let their instincts take hold and they were absorbed into the primitive biology here. Now there was a small group left, and Nico was tracking it.

The trail had started from several lifeboats, but Nico walked past the dead bodies and saw the footprints dwindle further still. Now he had arrived at the wreckage, and was climbing in to follow the trail further.

Inside was no better. Most of the time, Nico found himself to be crawling on all fours to get through the buckled passageways. Sparks constantly flew from broken equipment, and messed with 117649's sight sometimes. Finally, the trail ended at the control room.

The group was larger than he thought, and all of them were looking at him with either looks of shock or looks of stress. Thoughts were either "_My god! He's alive!"_ or "_Another person to support, damn it!"_ Nico told the orb next to him to prep the teleportation machine and wait for the group. The orb left and Nico walked over to the control panel, everybody with eyes on him. Not one word was spoken.

Nico reached into the damaged slots and pulled out a relatively intact chip. Cortana's chip. He slid it into a device on his new armor and Cortana started to breath again.

"Nicoâ€|aliveâ€|othersâ€|takenâ€|Installâ€|02â€|hurryâ€|" Cortana's speech died. The Forerunner suit could not properly support her. But Nico had heard enough.

He had to play the hero.

Again.

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: I don't know why, but I love this sort of ending. Two chapters in a day, least I owe everybody. I'll try to get another chapter up this weekend. R&R please.

24. Chapter 24

NH3: I have had this site in the back of my head for who knows how

long! I haven't updated in a LONG time and I can't believe that this story is almost over. So I decided that I was going to finish this tale and give everybody a treat!

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1300 hours, April 13, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), **_**Seeker of Truth**_** Crash Site Installation 01, unknown location.****

"Can you fix it?" Nico asked impatiently, arms crossed.

"Yes, but I'll need a few minutes to do so," 117649 Ironi Originality said, hovering over the chip on the table. Around it were bits and pieces of machinery that were being used to make a portable holographic supporter for Cortana. Nico needed the information she had, and the armor wouldn't help him.

Nico could still hear the new whispers of a group once silent. It was very awkward, because he was supposed to be dead. A Sangheili officer, probably the highest rank in the multi-race group, walked up behind him. Nico sensed his curiosity and turned.

"Commanderâ€|? Commander Nicolas Hornyakâ€|?" he said wearily, with hope in his eyes.

"Yes, it's me," he responded.

"You're hereâ€|but we never thought it possible. You were deadâ€|" he said hesitantly.

"Not quiteâ€|I still have work to do," Nico said, looking between the crowd and the officer. The room seemed to brighten around him, as the crowd's disbelief faded. Several other officers, several from the bridge crew, gathered around him, but left space.

"Nico!" Cortana's voice rang out behind him. Nico turned quickly, and several officers gathered around the table. Cortana's figure stood on the makeshift pedestal. "The Arbiter, Master Chief, and most of the _Recon's _crew have been captured and taken to Installation 02. The NOVA bombs are set here, but we have more to do than blow up the last ringsâ€|"

"I know," Nico interrupted. He knew what was coming. He grabbed Cortana's platform and began walking outside. He heard the pitter-patter of other's following him. Originality floated next to him. "Should I prepare the long-distance teleportation device again?" he asked.

"Yes," Nico told him. He floated ahead of them toward Nico's entrance as the crowd weaved through the wreckage.

"Nicoâ€|" Cortana said. He looked down at her. "How did you come back? You were declared dead."

"Ironi Originality," Nico said. "The Arbiter found out he could probably repair me, so they tried it. It worked."

"You refer to yourself like you were a machine," Cortana noted.

"I technically am. The repairs are artificial." Nico finished as they all arrived at the large teleportation pad. Ironic Originality floated nearby.

"The device is set. You may go to any destination now," he said. Nico turned around to tell the group to return to Earth on it, but was surprised at the cocking and reloading of guns.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Going with you," one of them said, none of them stopping.

"But you really should go back to Earth," Nico told them.

"But you can't take down an entire Flood armada alone. We won't let you," another person said.

"Go back to Earth. You won't sacrifice your lives here," Nico ordered sternly. It became very quiet. The lead human officer of the group walked up to him.

"Sir? You can court-martial us, but we are going with you. Nothing is stopping that.

>We are your legion," she said, loud enough for everyone to hear. Nico sighed after a few moments.<p>

"Fine. I don't have a choice, it seems," he said, walking onto the pad. "Cortana, detonate the NOVA bombs upon departure." He said, as the entire group followed. "Originality, location: Installation 02," he finished, before a bright light engulfed them all.

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1500 hours, April 13, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Flood Held Library, above Installation 02, unknown location.****

The insertion into the library was too easy. No one had known they had come before they could call for help. Defense was at a minimum in the beginning, but as they were moving farther in, security tightened. Nico was thinking that they would have to fight soon when he was spotted. Flood forms screamed and jumped at his figure on the wall. Nico took his staff out and sliced through them all, landing on several Infection forms and hacking at several Cyber Forms.

"Go!" Nico yelled. The group of nearly a hundred soldiers jumped out from the many shadows and it became a race through the halls. They found themselves at a dead end at the end of it, and they all turned to face the massive amount of Flood forms behind them. They drew guns and fired, tearing Flood to shreds. But they were coming in waves, and they were getting nowhere.

Suddenly, Nico saw a one-way swing to a lower level complex. But could he really abandon his team? Someone saw him looking at the wire and told an officer.

"Go, Arbiter, we will hold them off," the officer yelled. The team responded by refusing to cease fire. Nico looked at the soldiers once

more before swinging to another structure. He crashed through the Forerunner glass and fell on the floor. There were no Flood forms here, but the sound of battle still raged outside. Nico got up and looked around. He saw the makeshift prison cells, empty here. Nico moved into another hall before seeing people inside them. Nico made use of his staff again, releasing the prisoners. The majority were officers he had never seen before. But as he moved to the last ones, he saw familiar officers, shocked at his appearance here, and the final cells opened to the Forerunner Primates, and finally, the Chief and Arbiter. Upon entering the Arbiter's cell, the Arbiter walked up to him.

"Welcome back," the Arbiter said. Nico said nothing, but he did smile. He had no words, no time to plan them. The Arbiter brought him back, and Nico was eternally thankful. The Arbiter seemed to understand and walked out of the cell. Nico walked over to Sufiyan and the still MJOLNIR armor beside him.

"What happened to him?" Nico asked.

"Either he was drugged, or his armor paralyzed him," Sufiyan responded. Nico took out the platform with Cortana and took the chip out before sliding it into the back of the Master Chief's head. A few seconds later, he sat up.

"Welcome back," Cortana said. The Master Chief said nothing in response, only a slight nod to her, then another to Nico and Sufiyan. Nico walked out into the crowd and up to the Arbiter.

"What happened?" Nico asked.

"Regret has already gained the Sacred Icon. His procession is moving slowly toward the Control Room, but a lot of time has passed. It is likely he is three hours away, unless he was held up," the Arbiter said. Nico started pacing.

"Three hoursâ€¦how can we all get transport in three hours?" Nico whispered. The ever-so faithful orb floated past at that moment and heard him.

"Excuse me, but there is a solution to transport the four-hundred-and-sixty-three soldiers," the Monitor told him.

"There is?" Nico asked.

"Yes. The teleportation grid on the ring is out of order, but another means of travel lies in the lower levels of this Library. A ship," the Monitor said.

"A ship?" Nico asked curiously, realizing this could be their chance to stop Regret.

"Why, of course. The shipâ€¦"

"We'll use it. But first we need to help the others," Nico said, referring to the sound of battle outside.

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: One goal now: to finish telling this story. There is a lot that was left untold, now I have to finish my events. Rest assured, I'm back.

25. Chapter 25

NH3: I should have probably elaborated when I said this story would soon be over. Basically, they got two-and-a-half major events to get through before the end of the story and the story will need a sequel. So rest assured this storyline is nowhere near over. At the end of the story, I'll make requests for ideas in the sequel. No, the storyline IS planned, just need good battles

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1600 hours, April 13, 2553 (Official UNSC Time), Flood Held Library, Installation 02, unknown location.****

"Open fire!" Nico yelled. The Master Chief quickly complied with the Assault Rifle he had found lying around. They had managed to sneak around to the battle structure, climb a level, and get behind the mass of Flood pinning down the _Shadow of Intent _survivors. For a few moments, nothing happened except all the attention going to them. Then Flood forms began to tear apart, limb by limb, one after the other, until not even an Infection Form stood. It took fifteen seconds.

"Clear!" Nico yelled, before the groups began mingling. People talked, shared quick battle stories. The Master Chief did none of that. He was staring down at the form of Dr. Halsey instead, standing below his height.

"You have a strong leader," she remarked. "Never thought it would be an Elite. Or a Sangheili, as they call themselves."

"Yes ma'am," the Spartan said, stiffening. Dr. Halsey looked around at her surroundings, in a trance at the millions of Forerunner symbols on the walls, ceilings and floors. "There must be tons of ancient history here, or technology. If only we had the time." The Master Chief had nothing to say to that.

Suddenly, there was a great humming sound. It didn't sound like Flood. It sounded worse. It sounded like vehicles. The Master Chief walked over to the broken window Nico jumped through. Nico and the Arbiter came up behind him and gasped.

There was a large amount of space in between their current section and the prison section. Flood forms occupied every inch of available space. The rest of the space was taken up by dozens of vehicles, of human and Sangheili origin. Originality floated next to them at that point.

"Oh dear. It seems we have to head through those forms in order to acquire our ship," the orb remarked.

"We can't get through that," the Arbiter said. Nico then got an idea.

They all couldn't, but maybe a fewâ€¦

"How many do we need to pilot the ship?" Nico asked.

"Just one," the orb said. Nico turned to the Master Chief. "I need you to organize a distraction."

"What kind?"

"One that will allow me to fly over them on Ironic Originality." Nico said, before turning to pick his weapons back up. The Arbiter quickly stopped him.

"No, Nico. You don't have to play the hero this time. You've become more reckless. You only have one extra lifeâ€¦"

"One extra life you brought me. Now it's owed to you," Nico said. A moment of silence passed and the Arbiter sighed.

"Be careful." The Master Chief took a few minutes after that to rally the soldiers and prepare them. Once everything was set, he signaled Nico to go. Nico grabbed Ironic, and then pushed off, floating in the air. The orb quietly struggled for a moment, but soon kept Nico up. It began to fly high above the ground. The Master Chief offered a silent good luck before ordering the small army to fire.

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1610 hours, April 13, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Flood Held Library, Installation 02, unknown location.****

Nico fought with himself as they slowly floated over the army, growling at the weapon fire that was now being launched by the survivors and prisoners. He never admitted it, not even to himself in combat, that he hated heights. This was no help; they were going slowly, Nico had nothing to fire in his hand, and a fall meant certain death, even if he made the fall and lived.

"Tum, te, tum tum tumâ€¦" his lifeline said. Nico looked up and glared. That orb couldn't take this seriously at all. Suddenly, a shot was fired from below, and the bullet tore through his hand. Nico let go and cradled the wound under his neck as Ironic rocked harshly to the side.

"Damn it!" Nico yelled the human curse. He looked below and saw a Flood form with a pistol looking at him from far below, hungry. Nico, in anger, forgot about the pain and pulled out a pistol from his side and fired back. The Flood form tore apart and Nico dropped the gun, cradling his hand once more as they began to descend. They finally landed and Nico fell to the floor, clutching his hand.

"Ow!" he yelled, reaching for his com. "Arbiter, I made it," he breathed.

"Good. Any injuries?" the Arbiter said as Nico grabbed a nearby piece of cloth and wrapped it around his hand.

"My hand got shot, but I can stop the bleeding. Just hold tight, I get you out of there," Nico said into the microphone.

"Alright. Arbiter out," Nico heard the com switch off and he followed the Monitor through the halls. Finally, they arrived at a platform, and Nico looked over at the ship.

The ship had a drop ship-like design to it, but it was big. Nico had no doubts that it could travel in space. A ramp connected it to a side entrance in the dark space and Nico followed the Monitor inside. He didn't examine the inside specifically. He went straight for the cockpit.

Inside, there was a circle of Forerunner designs on the floor, but nothing else. There must have been some incredible technology in here. That soon proved true.

"Please step here," 117649 said, hovering above the circle. Nico did so and looked down at the patterns. They were glowing, but he realized his armor was glowing too! A small hologram appeared in front of him. They were in Forerunner, but the technology soon converted to Sangheili, Nico's first language. He could tell it said 'power,' so he pressed the button. A few moments later, a humming noise was growing and Nico found himself floating into a seat position above the floor, suited to his figure. He was literally standing on nothing! An amazing find!

Nico instinctively knew what to do next. He thrust his arms out, and the image became clear. There was a solid holographic array around him. The air he was floating on was also a holographic chair!

"This is amazing!" Nico said as the controls converted for his comfort.

"Yes. It is one of our finest designs," the orb responded, apparently replacing the shipboard computer with him as a miniature array of symbols appeared around him. This ship ran on vocal commands too!

"Alright, lets see what this thing can do," Nico said, grabbing the controls, lightly with his injured hand and hard with the other. He put the ship to half speed and they rocketed out of the dark space into the light. Nico steered toward the area of Flood forms immediately. "Does this thing have weapons?"

"Yes. Upgraded Sentinel Major weapon components have been adapted to the ship in order to provideâ€œ"

"Thanks!" Nico said, before finding the controls and firing. Squads of Flood exploded and vehicles burst into flames as Nico maneuvered the side next to the level where the others were. Nico pulled up ship controls and opened the side door.

"Get in!" he yelled into the com. He saw dots representing friends on the schematics stop loading and he pushed the throttle halfway again. The ship rocketed away towards the Control Room and Nico smiled.

They were alive. That seemed to be the thing that mattered.

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: Alright, you might need to see the end of the story before giving ideas. But give them anyway, because I could probably fit them into the next story.

26. Chapter 26

NH3: Wowâ€¦I can't believe it's been this long since an update. And I feel guilty, so I'm sorry to all my faithful readers and reviewers (Note: If you are both, Extra Apologies to you). I need to finish this, take a small break (no, not a freaking month) and then begin this thing's sequel. So, rest assured, THE SPARK IS BACK!

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1900 hours, April 13, 2553 (Flood Adopted Time), Flood-Held Control Room, Installation 02, unknown location.****

The Prophet of Regret grazed in immense gratitude to the gods. His goal was reached: the Control Room towered over him, beckoning him and the Index inside. At long last, those filthy heretics would pay, for abandoning him despite weak numbers and false truths. The Great Journey was nigh, and his Flood forms bristled with excitement at his control.

They were his now. Their minds belonged to him, and Regret was now in control of the strongest army in the galaxy. If the ring couldn't be activated, they wouldn't be stopped. They would all be hungry.

The procession stopped, and Regret slipped off the hover board, balanced and a grueling mess of tentacles. He was almost there. In his path of life, he had reached the step before godliness.

Little did the Flood of Regret know that to climb that high meant punishmentâ€¦

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1900 hours, April 13, 2553 (Flood Adopted Time), approaching Flood-Held Control Room, Installation 02, unknown location.****

Through the tropical atmosphere, Nico could see the Control Room seem to approach, even though it was the other way around. One hand was kept on the holographic controls, monitoring ship commands. The other was being held to his side, where a Sangheili medic was patching it up.

"There you go, sir," she said. "You will be able to fire a gun, but don't enter close combat with it."

"Thank you," Nico responded, resuming a two handed control position. It would seem unfortunate that only he could pilot the ship, as seen from his suit's glowing symbols. However, the operations were far simpler than it seemed.

He snapped back to the focus at hand. This had to be done quickly. The ring could be activated at any moment, and even then, his time in

a spirit world of 'immortality' had revealed a greater threat. Wherever those Cyber Forms came from, they were at the center of it all.

"How much longer?" the Arbiter had been standing beside the platform, watching for their destination. So had the Master Chief, Sufiyan, David Jackson, Dr. Halsey, and a five-and-a-half foot tall Cortana.

"Three minutes," Nico checked. "I'll put the ship on autopilot. We need a plan, and Ironic Originality and I have come up with one." He maneuvered in mid-air next to the orb. "Show them,"

"Certainly," the orb said. A holographic schematic of the Control Room appeared before them. It had some resemblance to Installation 05, however, this one was bigger. The Index would only be regained at the top of the structure, but this basic ring had a complex procedure around that.

"This is the problem. The Index floats in the shaft at the structure's ground zero. This shaft is cavernous, but cone shaped. Basically, we need to be at the top level in order to get it," Nico said.

"And how do we do that?" Dr. Halsey and Cortana said at the same time. No one laughed, because this wasn't the time. Not even they did, for they were, in a way, the same person, so it made perfect sense.

"That's why we all are here. There are five panels that can each float the Index higher. Some will be guarded. Arbiter, your Sangheili need to enter the front entrance and activate the panel that lies before the Index. This part is tough, as the Flood are heavily concentrated here" Nico said. The Arbiter nodded in acceptance.

"David Jackson, your legion will be dropped off at the third floor entrance with the Master Chief's Spartans. You'll split up there, Spartans heading to the far side of the floor for one panel, the legion making their way down a floor. These three are the locks that will release the Index to the top.

"The fourth one is a backup, and a data interface. It is not guarded, so the Forerunner Primates, Dr. Halsey and Cortana will be dropped off on the platform with the panel, their primary role is a backup and a Forerunner Info Search, or FIS for short.

"The top is the final panel. It is dumbly unguarded, so I'll go alone and wait for the Index to come, at which point I'll release it and grab it. Call in if you are trapped on a platform and can't reach the top, so I can come get you. Any questions?"

None. Just an acknowledged silence.

"One minute before we drop the first group off," Nico finished, turning back to the controls as all but Cortana left the room. He regained manual control and slowed down for a little extra time to rally troops. Suddenly, a beam of fierce light shot out of the top. This was going to be close. Nico hit full atmo throttle and landed twelve seconds later.

"First team off!" he yelled. An entire legion of Sangheili soldiers began tearing through the Flood forms waiting for them. Nico put down a barrier of Cyber Forms with the Needle Gun aboard before lifting off. He maneuvered halfway to the other side and up before hovering above a platform.

"Second and third teams! Go!" he exclaimed into the com. The ship shook for a few moments as it got used to the lighter weight without Spartans. When it stopped, Nico let the ship curve around and up to another platform, with a small entrance inside but a panel right by the door. Cortana disappeared into the network as Nico flipped on the com.

"Unload fourth team!" he finished as the seven got off. _My turn,_ he thought as he rocketed straight up to the top. He leveled out there and a three-minute timer appeared on his HUD.

"This is the amount of time you have until the ring is activated. For every panel activated, you will gain another minute to take the Index," 117649 Irony Originality said.

"Boy, oh, boy, life gets better every minute," Nico said sarcastically, grabbing his weapon. The orb was not a pleasant companion to be with, due to a monotone voice and complex sentences.

Nico walked through the ship, hearing Flood Forms growl through several floors all the way to the ship. He jumped down to the edge, as the ship was hovering because it wasn't small enough to fit on the top. He walked a small distance and opened a free com.

"Panel 1 deactivated. We are retreatingâ€"Regret's bodyguards are no match for usâ€"!" The radio said. Another message buzzed in. "Panel 3 deactivated. Proceeding to help Jackson's legion," a Spartan said. Nico couldn't tell which. He reached the top and watched as the timer began counting down from five minutes.

At four minutes left, another message buzzed in. "Panel 2 disabled. Activate Panel 4!" a marine yelled. The situation was far more tense from the sidelines, especially when Dr. Halsey responded and said they were being attacked. Two minutes of no-casualty defense of Panel 4 later, a green light was given and a minute later, the Index floated before him, just out of reach. He looked at the panel and pushed buttons. He then hit trouble.

He needed an authorization code.

"Damn it, I don't have one!" Nico said. His com crackled to life.

"Nico, what's wrong?" Cortana said.

"This panel needs an authorization code!" he responded, typing in a few random numbers. Nothing. Nico needed time to think. With 45 seconds left, that's what he did. He closed his eyes, then remembered one.

"Originality's code!" Nico realized. He entered it, but it didn't work. Nico moaned and thought again. 15 seconds to go, he had it! He

was the Maven, a guardian of the Forerunners! He entered in his personal authorization code: 7666104! The computer beeped in glee, but the Index began to drop.

"No!" Nico yelled, knowing Regret might catch it again. He jumped after it into freefall. Halfway down, he grabbed it, but watched the levels pass in despair. Just as he was going to pass the ground level, he was caught at his neck by a slimy tentacle. The tentacle thrust him into the deformed face of Regret.

"Give me the Sacred Icon!" he yelled, furious. The room began to shake from the overloaded energy.

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

Well, looks like they have succeeded in stopping this ring from firing, but fate has put Nico and the Index in Regret's tentacles! To top it off, the ring is gonna blow soon from the overloaded energy, due to the ring's older design. Will Nico survive Regret's wrath? Will everyone escape the ring? And what other threat is there from the Cyber Forms? All will be revealed sooner than previouslyâ€|

27. Chapter 27

NH3: Seems the Halo genre is practically dead until Halo Wars comes out later this year. Ah well, on with the story!

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1912 hours, April 13, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Flood-Held Control Room, Installation 02, unknown location.****

"Never!" Nico yelled, dropping his staff to find better purchase on the tentacle that held him aloft.

"Now!" Regret screamed. Every shaking of the walls seemed to enlarge the evil fire in his eyes. Nico found himself giving in inside his mind. It took a moment to realize that he was being hypnotized through the tentacles, much like the Flood had been.

"Try me!" Nico yelled back to his face. He began to fight the hypnotic stare with his own telepathy.

"You are an abomination to your entire kind! You are afflicted with a disease that will make you a burden someday! You turned to heresy, and despite the betrayal of the Sangheili, I know what they see in youâ€|they still see a traitor, someone they will be ready to kill when your time comesâ€|" Regret said, starting out fierce, but this becoming softer into false pity.

"You're a liar! Not only to me, but to everyone, even the Flood!" Nico yelled desperately. But he was already giving in. Regret's words hit at a very personal level, and Nico's psychological defenses weren't that high. He began to shed tears.

"I'm not the liar! You are! All of you! Your lies have prevented the

Great Journey for too long!" Regret screamed again. He began to rant, but Nico was in muddled thoughts. His head wondered if he was a burden, a nuisance, someone not to trust. The hypnosis was beginning to overtake him partly, giving him a sense that he was not worthy to live anymore. He squeezed his eyes shut and thrust out the arm that held the Index. In his hand, the Index was precariously held over the chasm.

"No!" Regret yelled, but it was too late: the Index fell out of Nico's hand and into the dark, fated to shatter at the bottom

Regret's fury began to encompass his actions. He angrily threw Nico at a wall. He slammed against it, falling, and blood spilled from his side and hand. Nico felt nothing, only the same despair Regret had given him. He felt worthless to everybody. Regret slithered over and proceeded to slam him against the floor repeatedly. More blood was spilled, but Nico was senseless. Suddenly, Regret stopped.

"Have him," he said. The Flood Forms began to come closer, slowly, as if they were savoring the flavor. Nico knew he was going to die, unless a miracle happened.

That miracle happened when all the Infection Forms in front of Nico's face blew up. Nico was blown to a face-up position, but he still felt nothing. Suddenly, a few humans and Sangheili stood over him, fighting Flood. Just as suddenly, they retreated, but not before trying to drag him back. It failed, though Nico began to regain confidence in himself after this act.

Flood Forms raced past above his body, then came the slithering octopus that was Regret. He stopped right next to Nico's body. He began to say something, but Nico's hearing hadn't broken through his own trance. Nico felt around with his usable hand and found something on his belt. From the imprinted design, Nico knew it was a family relic.

"By the blood and honor that my family holds trueâ€¦you shall be vanquished!" Nico yelled. Although he couldn't hear his own confident words, he knew everyone had heard him, and before Regret could move away, Nico rammed the handle to his skin and activated the Energy Sword.

There was sizzle of energy he began to hear, then the bloodcurdling scream of Regret, and finally, he could hear again. The walls were still shaking, but even more violently. Regret's scream brought on the Flood's screaming. There was no way to know if they would die or not. In the chaos, however, another Sangheili picked him up and started to run. The area began to get lighter and quieter, than it became totally quiet as they entered the Forerunner ship. A glance at the chest between the armor told him the savior was the Arbiter.

Nico was let down onto the floor and the Arbiter said his name, while Sangheili, human, and even Chris, the Forerunner medic, rushed over. There came the feeling of speed in a ship and then two large vibrations before everything went blankâ€¦|

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

1200 hours, April 16, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Forerunner Ship, in slipspace

"He's waking up!"

The Arbiter turned to the bed silently, looking upon the last Sangheili that still had to leave the makeshift infirmary. Nico had been battered beyond any other person in the battle that wasn't dead. It seemed like the single worst experience for him to endure. Arbiter felt guilty whenever someone said he was lucky to have survived that battle, because Nico might have been fated to die.

The young Sangheili poked an exhausted eye open, then both blinked into a more active status, despite his woes. He looked around at the people around him, all people he knew or at least probably talked to. He took a look at himself and didn't seem surprised. In fact, the Arbiter thought he actually looked like he deserved it. Then came a face of guilt on both faces.

"Arbiter, I—" Nico didn't seem to have any words. Thanks wasn't good enough, Nico didn't know how many times he was saved by this one Sangheili.

The quiet moment was disrupted suddenly. Nico perked up and lifted his forward half up, coughing blood into a pan that had been placed on his lap. Some quickly filed out to let medics in.

"No! Wait! Arbiter, we have a problem," Nico said, wiping the blood on his mouth away.

"What is it?" he responded.

"The Cyber Forms—they were the Gravemind's backup plan. They are ready to strike Sanghelios! Four days from now—wait, how long have I been out?"

"Three days—"

"We have one day to return to Sanghelios!" Nico finished.

"Someone tell Originality to reset our course to Earth!" the Arbiter yelled. More orders were yelled by minor officers in the room. Everyone was given a job to do. Everyone filed out, the Arbiter being last.

"Arbiter, wait!" Nico called out. The Arbiter returned to his side.

"Yes, young one?" the Arbiter said.

"Am I worthless? A burden? A nuisance? A traitor?" he asked slowly. The Arbiter was dreading this. He had seen all of Nico's mental torture, the lies still implanted in his mind. How could he respond? He finally narrowed it down.

"Fate decides us. If you were anything like that, then it is your place. However, your place is beside mine now. That place is one of honor. What you think you are right now—that might be the reason you're here beside me, or just lies told to you—" the Arbiter said.

A medic came in and injected a medicine into Nico's arm. The ensuing sleep took over instantly.

He walked out of the room, where he was greeted by 117649 Ironical Originality.

"Hello. I see the Maven has woken up. It appears he has been sedated thoughâ€|"

"Maven?" the Arbiter asked.

"Oh yes, he took up that title when he woke up from treatment at the launching facility. It is a high title in the Forerunner ways. Translated, the meaning is the word 'Guardian.'"

"Fitting. He knew about Sanghelios and the Cyber Forms, so it's natural for him to guard his home planet," the Arbiter smiled.

"Yes. Very fitting. It's a shame he won't accompany us for the upcoming battle," the orb continued.

"Don't underestimate him. He recovers fast, but even in this case, he'll probably find a way to help othersâ€|"

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: I had decided I needed to work on personality, but something tells me that's for the sequel. R&R!

28. Chapter 28

NH3: I must give thanks to killerman83ca and StarLightSeraph, because they were quite possibly the single two who have helped me with this story and gave me encouraging feedback. Thanks you two! randomly hugs them

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1400 hours, April 18, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Forerunner Ship, approaching Sanghelios, in Slipspace****

The trip took two days for the journey to Sanghelios. The message had gotten out, and the majority of the fleet had gathered just in time. Even the humans and those Hunters that had remained on their side came as well. One day had been all it took: the battle had been fought for a day already. Yet frequent transmissions proved that Sanghelios was holding strong.

The Arbiter currently stood on the platform of control, unable to float due to the lack of a Forerunner suit. He had thought of using Nico's armor, but it didn't fit him. Nico had made a good recovery: although he needed more time, he could already walk limited distances, which was enough to make him smile, for the first time in days.

But Nico was having trouble with himself. He had taken the Arbiter's words to heart, but the lies still hadn't left him. Dr. Halsey was helping with that: she had a degree in psychology, and Nico's way of

thought wasn't that different from a human.

The Arbiter returned attention to his controls. Next to him were Nate, Forerunner Primate, and the Master Chief, also controlling the starship.

"One minute to Slipspace exit," Ironie chirped from his spot. Arbiter flipped on his com.

"Jackson, Sufiyan, Cortana. Are the ship weapons ready?"

"Standing by."

"Good to go!"

"Charged and ready to fire," The ship had a large array of weapons controlled separately. Soldiers with such experience were using them. Now they waited, for the longest seconds ever. The battle was probably in their hands. If they failed, Sanghelios could fall also.

"Exiting Slipspace now," the orb said. The ship shook slightly as they transitioned to normal space over the north pole of Sanghelios. Ahead of them lay a sea of fire. The Sanghelios Fleet was constantly on its toes to make sure that Flood only got through when that ship was going to burn in the atmosphere. In the back of the fleet was a single, large ship. The Arbiter awed at this.

This ship had the length of High Charity's height. It was only half as fat, but it seemed held together by the Flood Nest inside. And surprisingly, every ship of the enemy had been organized.

This was a feat of Cyber Forms, but the Arbiter had no doubt that ship held the leader of this attack. The best part was that the Forerunner ship had a straight path towards it.

"Weaponry, keep the cruisers off of us. We are going at that flagship," the Arbiter spoke with brimming confidence.

"Aye," was the common response. The Arbiter pushed the throttle very high, and they rocketed toward the flagship. Beneath them, ships exploded from the Forerunner weaponry. They reached the flagship and entered close combat, each ship bearing as many as the other, but landing no definite shots. The Forerunner ship was too fast, but the flagship was too massive.

"It must have a weak pointâ€¦" the Arbiter whispered.

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

****1405 hours, April 18, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Forerunner Ship, Infirmary, above Sanghelios,****

The entire room held three things: the medicine/bio readings, the bed, and Nico in the bed. A holographic panel had been opened in front of him and he was scanning the flagship for a weakness. But he couldn't see any either. Nico lay back as the ship shook slightly, in deep thought.

Suddenly, there was a voice. It was very raspy, and very faint. It called out his name, but it seemed to come from nowhere. It called his name again, and Nico recognized it with dread.

"Regret? No, it can't beâ€¦I killed you, you and your liesâ€¦" Nico shuddered as he spoke into the room.

"No. You didn't. I live on inside of this shipâ€¦" the panel with the flagship seemed to flash in Nico's eyes.

"Glad you will die," Nico responded with a shaky confidence.

"I won't die! I'll live on! I'm the only weakness of my ship! No spy can escape the Flood's sight! And you are the weakness of yours, which should make this easyâ€¦" Nico suddenly felt searing pain in his head. He screamed, and the Forerunner metals did the same.

"Noâ€¦I can't let this ship failâ€¦" Nico strained against the pain, opening his eyes to an illusion of tentacles grabbing him through the panel, and Infection Forms rushing in, covering him, and consuming him. It was a battle of mental power, and Regret was winning.

It was a very sudden moment that changed the odds. Nico thought he was going to die, but then remembered fellow soldiers, heretics, everybody he valued. This thought made Regret scream as it boosted his own telepathy. Nico felt himself winning. In one final burst, Regret was finally vanquished!

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****1410 hours, April 18, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), Forerunner Ship, Bridge, above Sanghelios,****

Despite the many wounds given to the flagship, it was still holding hard. The Arbiter began to wonder if it even had a weak point.

"Arbiter, there is a buildup of power inside the ship!" Nate said, rapidly hitting buttons. The Arbiter noticed changes too: the ship had stopped firing. The Arbiter rocketed away from the close combat danger zone and spun the ship around. A bright aura was encompassing the ship, and cracks were appearing on it.

A minute of this odd activity continued, and then the ship blew spectacularly, sending debris into other Flood ships, eliminating most of the enemy fleet. The Arbiter was relieved at this. The fleet had lost leadership, guidance, and probably more. It would be simple to finish off the rest of the fleet. The Arbiter turned towards the last scraps of the fleet and began enjoying himself.

Ship after ship blew up in their wake. The work was finally done soon and the Arbiter relieved the controls to the orb. He went to the infirmary straight after, the Master Chief behind him. They reached it and found Nico in bed, oddly exhausted, despite his recovery. The Arbiter checked the medicine, but the levels were still normal. Something more had happened during this battle. He looked at Nico with a questioning look. Nico held his head in his hand.

"This is going to be one long storyâ€¦" he sighed, as the ship shook and began to land on Sanghelios. They had finally come homeâ€¦

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****1300 hours, May 25, 2553 (Adopted Sangheili Time), **_**Predicted Miracle,**_** in Slipspace, approaching Portal Site****

After the "Battle of the Flood of Regret", as it was called, the entire crew that survived these separate instances was given a month's leave, so as to organize everything, regroup, gather all the information, and basically do all the extra work. They were glad for this, though Nico spent the first half complaining in bed.

That time was up though, and it was back to work, which looked to become boring very soon. The Arbiter watched the timer on his screen reach one minute and start counting. Nico sat in a commander chair beside him, performing menial tasks and also going through the paperwork he couldn't do when he was locked up in the hospital.

They had a new ship, which had been built and finished in the shipyard over Sanghelios a few days after the battle. It was in the Arbiter's honor to name it, so he named it after the miracle at his last great battle. He remembered how he had predicted the help from Nico. So the new ship's

name was the Predicted Miracle. And in truth, Nico was the true captain of her: he had been promoted on Sanghelios to the new rank of 'Maven', which was equal to the 'Arbiter' rank. He still wasn't happy about the awards, but it made his day when the Arbiter came and said he would be commanding it for a while. They shared a fleet

Some familiar faces weren't there anymore: the Master Chief returned to fighting rebels seeking to take advantage of Earth's crippled status, although it had improved incredibly. The group of Forerunner Primates had left so some studies could be done on them. In truth, they were just as curious of themselves as everyone else was. David Jackson had also left to fight for Earth, but his legion remained on the ship. His promotion gave him control over a sizable amount of human forces.

There were, however, some new faces and one familiar one. Rebecca Robinson had been left in command of the ship's human legion, and she stood by on the bridge. Officers from the Recon, Shadow of Intent, and the Seeker of Truth began serving on the ship, creating another multi-race environment. These different minds could keep the ship running for millennia. And since they had gone to Earth recently, they had picked up Rtas 'Vadum (he was on Earth to lead a Sangheili Army) to help command the Predicted Miracle. He gladly took the position and now sat in the other commander chair next to the Arbiter.

They were currently on a survey mission, after a diplomatic mission to Earth, and surprisingly, the survey site was the portal where their last adventure began. The Arbiter couldn't help but wonder what would have happened if Nico's thinking hadn't shot him through the portal, if the order hadn't been to preserve high-ranking officers, or if it had never thrown them out of Slipspace in the first place.

"Exiting Slipspace," Nico said, looking up at the view screen. Stars blinked into sight as they reentered normal space. The ship began to turn slowly.

"Sir, picking up the anomalyâ€¦wait, it's different. The sizes, volumes, they are all off," a human officer said.

"Oddâ€¦" Rtas said.

"What would that mean?" the Arbiter asked. The ship stopped turning to reveal the anomaly, which wasn't exactly an anomaly anymoreâ€¦

"It's a planetâ€¦" Nico said. They were on the night side of the planet, so they saw many green lights on the surface. The life was sentient, they were sure of it. But scans didn't reveal much at this distance.

"Bring us closer," Rtas ordered calmly. The distance began to close.

"Sir, a flare just occurred on the planet surface. An unidentified ship is heading towards us," another officer said. The lighted flare could be seen on the view screen, and steadily, scans brought them views of the object heading towards them.

"By the godsâ€¦" Rtas whispered.

The object heading straight towards them was a Forerunner Dreadnoughtâ€¦

"Take evasive action!" the Arbiter said, noting that the ship would otherwise crush them. The ship dipped down.

The Forerunner Dreadnought fired its primary weapons, a beam that cut through the fleet, exploding everything it touchedâ€¦

****HALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALOHALO****

NH3: This might be the longest chapter in the story. It is also the last. Finally, one of my stories have been completed. Of course, there is going to be a sequel. You won't see how the battle went or how they got away thoughâ€¦that's up to your imaginations. Thanks for reading this story everybody. A lot of you have said this was the best Halo fan fiction out there, and it's made me really happy.

Once again, many thanks to killerman83ca and StarLightSeraph.

To StarLight, if you ever write a Halo story, then you can put Nico in it, because he is one of your favorite OCs

To killerman83ca, there will be moreâ€¦

End
file.